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# ON MENDELSSOHN'S ORGAN SONATAS

Charles W. Pearce

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MENDELSSOHN'S

# ORGAN SONATAS,

TECHNICALLY AND CRITICALLY  
DISCUSSED

BY

CHARLES WILLIAM PEARCE,  
MUS. D., CANTAB, F.R.C.O.

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TO THOSE EXCELLENT MUSICIANS  
OTTO GOLDSCHMIDT, ESQ.,  
AND  
ARTHUR O'LEARY, ESQ.,  
TWO PERSONAL FRIENDS OF  
FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY,  
THIS LITTLE BOOK,  
DEALING WITH THE EVER TO BE ADMIREO  
OP. 65  
OF THAT GREAT COMPOSER,  
IS CORDIALLY INSCRIBED  
WITH THE AUTHOR'S GRATEFUL THANKS  
FOR VALUABLE ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY THEM  
DURING ITS COMPIIATION.

## CONTENTS.



Chapter.		Page.					
I.	Introduction	...	...	...	...	...	I
II.	First Sonata in F minor and major	...	...	...	...	...	10
III.	Second Sonata in C minor and major	...	...	...	...	...	19
IV.	Third Sonata in A major and minor	...	...	...	...	...	27
V.	Fourth Sonata in B flat major	...	...	...	...	...	34
VI.	Fifth Sonata in D major	...	...	...	...	...	43
VII.	Sixth Sonata in D minor and major	...	...	...	...	...	54
VIII.	Conclusion	...	...	...	...	...	68

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## PREFACE.

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N 1899, whilst preparing a new "Academic" Edition of Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas for the well-known publishing house of Messrs. Hammond & Co., 5, Vigo Street, London, W., I was asked to read a paper on these immortal works before a small gathering of musicians in London. That paper was afterwards extended into a course of articles which appeared in the pages of *The Organist and Choirmaster* for 1900-1; and these articles, with additions and corrections, are now printed in book form at the request of many professional friends. My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Arthur O'Leary, for kindly allowing me frequent reference to the composer's autograph copy of the Sonatas, of which he is the proud possessor; to Mr. Otto Goldschmidt and to Dr. W. H. Cummings, F.S.A., for valuable information concerning the authorship of certain German

PREFACE.

Chorales mentioned in this book; to Mr. F. G. Edwards, for many interesting facts gleaned whilst he was preparing the paper on the Sonatas read by him before the Musical Association a few years ago; and to my old friends, Dr. H. A. Harding, Dr. C. Vincent, and Mr. T. Roylands-Smith. It is also due to the memory of my dear old master, the late Dr. Edward J. Hopkins, of the Temple Church, to record my indebtedness for many practical suggestions, as to the registration, &c., of these beautiful compositions, which I learned from him.

CHARLES W. PEARCE.

CRAIGMILLAR, AVENUE ROAD,  
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SACRED MUSIC.  
AN ANALYSIS OF  
MENDELSSOHN'S ORGAN SONATAS

By CHARLES W. PEARCE, MUS. D. CANTAB., F.R.C.O.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTION.

**G**HE first thing which strikes a musician about Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, is the astonishing fact that although these works are universally accepted as being the very best of their kind, yet not one of them contains a single movement written in what is commonly called *Sonata* form. It is so remarkable that a set of masterpieces should hold their own for half a century and more under such an apparently disqualifying condition, that a short account of the causes which led to their production may not be without interest to the inquiring organ student of to-day. I am indebted for a great many of the following facts to a paper read by Mr. F. G. Edwards before the Musical Association on Nov. 13th, 1894.

In 1844, Mendelssohn paid his fifth visit to England, and whilst staying in this country, he astonished everyone by his playing of Bach's organ fugues, and by his own wonderful extemporizations on the organ. Some of the leading organists of the day, who were fortunate enough to hear these performances, expressed a strong wish that the young German composer should write some organ pieces in various styles. Mr. Coventry, of the firm

of Coventry & Hollier (then of 71, Dean Street, Soho), communicated this desire to Mendelssohn during the visit first referred to, with the result that the composer quitted our shores with a commission to write *three organ voluntaries*.

During his holiday at Soden, near Frankfort, in the latter part of July and the beginning of August, 1844, the execution of this English commission was commenced; and in a letter dated Aug. 29th, 1844, Mendelssohn wrote thus from Frankfort: "I have been very busy about the organ pieces which you wanted me to write for you, and they are nearly finished. I should like you to call them 'Three *Sonatas* for the Organ' instead of *Voluntaries*. Tell me if you like this title as well; if not, I think the name of *Voluntaries* will suit the pieces also, the more so as I do not know what it means precisely."

To this letter Mr. Coventry replied on Nov. 19th, 1844: "I like the term *Sonata* just as well as *Voluntary*." A further letter from Mendelssohn to Mr. Coventry, dated May 1st, 1845, stated that the composer had written "a kind of *Organ School* in Six Sonatas, for that instrument," and asked the publisher whether "he would like to have the whole work or only half of it." It was finally agreed that the Six Sonatas were to be published as *one work*, and it was announced to the world by an advertisement with the title, "Mendelssohn's School of Organ Playing," but this was withdrawn by the composer before the publication of the work, and the present title was substituted—"Six Sonatas for the Organ." The work was issued in October, 1845, by subscription, at one guinea per copy.

From the foregoing facts we may safely draw these deductions:—Mendelssohn during his visits to England had heard English Organists play *Voluntaries*, and in spite of his modest assertion

that he did not precisely know what the term Voluntary meant, he had extemporized Voluntaries himself in more than one English church. He accepted a commission from an English publisher to write three Voluntaries for English Organists, and although he afterwards relinquished the term Voluntaries for "Sonatas," yet he commenced his task with the former term well in view. It may help to throw some light upon the formal construction of the Six Organ Sonatas, if we attempt to gather a few general notions from a contemporary record of what Mendelssohn's improvisations on the Organ were really like; comparing such an account with the character of the Organ Voluntaries which were in vogue in this country in the middle of the 19th century, and then endeavouring to discover any points of formal resemblance between these old English Voluntaries and the Organ Sonatas of Mendelssohn.

An interesting article entitled, "Mendelssohn as an organist," appeared in the *Musical World* for Sept. 15th, 1837; it is unsigned, but it contains sufficient internal evidence to suggest the name of Dr. H. J. Gauntlett as its probable writer; that distinguished English musician being a frequent contributor to the *Musical World* at the time. We read that Mendelssohn's

"opening movements are distinguished for seriousness and solemnity; the perfect purity of his harmonies, the natural manner in which they follow each other, the rigid exclusion of every note not exclusively belonging to them, and their perfect unity one with the other, however, proclaim the refined and accomplished scholar, with whom art has become second nature; and as his thoughts thicken, and the spirit retires to commune within itself, the themes break forth one by one, and a warmth and energy, a freedom and fluency diffuse a life and spread a charm over his performance, that at once rivet the individual attention of his auditors. His extempore playing is very diversified—the soft movements full of tenderness and expression, exquisitely beautiful and

impassioned, and yet so regular and methodical, that they appear the productions of long thought and meditation, from the lovely and continued streams of melody, which so uninterruptedly glide onwards in one calm and peaceful flow. In his loud preludes there is an endless variety of new ideas totally different from those usually in vogue ; and the pedal passages so novel and independent, so solemn and impressive, so grand and dignified, as to take his auditors quite by surprise. His last performance [on the memorable occasion when he met Samuel Wesley at Christ Church, Newgate Street, on Tuesday morning, Sept. 11th, 1837] on a subject given him at the moment, was the most extraordinary of his efforts. The theme was followed with an intenseness and ardour surpassing belief, but in the eagerness of pursuit was never deprived of its dignity or importance. There were no wild eccentricities, no excursive digressions, no ineffective displays of erudition, it was as if, whilst anxiously untwisting the subtleties of counterpoint—

‘Something within would still be shadowing out  
All possibilities ; with thoughts unsought  
His mind held dalliance, to which his hand  
Gave substance and reality.’

The enthusiasm, the fire and energy, with which the whole was carried on, was perfectly marvellous ; he sat at the keys as one inspired, casting forth one gorgeous jewel after the other, sparkling in all the radiance of light—throwing out a succession of bright passages, anyone of which would have made the reputation of an ordinary performer. His invention never failed him for a moment ; there was no return to any phrases or expressions used at an earlier part of his performance, and his genius appeared less unwearied and more boundless than during the first half-hour.”

Although these words were written some seven years *before* Mr. Coventry commissioned Mendelssohn to write some pieces for the organ, the reader will readily admit that a great deal of this description of the extemporaneous playing might well be used as a fairly accurate criticism of the Organ Sonatas. We may therefore assume that Mendelssohn *wrote as he played*, i.e., his written compositions may be regarded as the permanent embodiment of the exact manner and style of the fleeting ideas which came into his

mind whilst actually playing. We can scarcely wonder that after hearing so many impromptu performances of the kind described above, our English organists should have asked for "something more" and that in a permanent form, in the shape of written compositions cast in the same rich mould. And, on the other hand, we may feel sure that after delighting so many audiences of English organists and others, Mendelssohn had a fairly clear idea of what the subscribers to the first edition of his Organ Sonatas would expect from his pen. He undertook to write three *Voluntaries*. By the term voluntary was meant the organ performance which formerly separated the reading of the Psalms from the reading of the Lessons in the Church of England Service. From its position it was sometimes called the *Middle Voluntary*. Now what was the general form of the English Voluntary of those days? Sir Walter Parratt in an article in *Grove's Dictionary*, mentions the names of Samuel Wesley, William Russell and Thomas Adams as the last of the great Voluntary writers and players. We know that Mendelssohn heard Samuel Wesley—the greatest of them all—play on the date referred to above. It was the last time that Wesley ever played upon the organ, and we have it upon the authority of \* living musicians who then heard him play, that it was a remarkably fine performance. We also have it upon record that Mendelssohn expressed to Wesley the pleasure that performance had given him.

If we study the written voluntaries of Samuel Wesley, we find that he favours the Old French Overture form of Lully, invariably beginning with

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\* My old master, Dr. E. J. Hopkins, was living when these words were written.—C. W. P.

a dignified slow movement (*Adagio, Largo, Larghetto*, or *Andante Maestoso*) either for the Great Diapasons, or for the Swell and Choir Stops. To this succeeds an *Allegro* for the Full Organ, or Gt. to 15th, which is sometimes followed directly by a Fugato Movement, but in other cases a second slow and *soft* movement is interpolated between the two loud and quick ones. Only *one* of his "Twelve Grand Voluntaries" ends with a slow movement; only *three* have movements in a key other than that of the Tonic, and in each of these cases the relative minor is the key chosen. In no case is the Fugato movement absent. And although S. Wesley knew exceedingly well how to write movements in "Sonata form" (having produced one as early as 1788, *before* Mozart wrote his three great symphonies—the G minor, the E $\flat$ , and the "Jupiter"), he does not write a single movement of any one of his Voluntaries in this form. He chose rather the Ancient Simple Binary form used by Bach and Handel in their suites, &c. Russell may be said to have founded his Voluntary style upon the model of the Suite, since, while the Fugato form is absent from twelve out of twenty-four of his Voluntaries which I have examined, there is scarcely one case in which the Ancient Simple Binary form is not present. Now what do we find in Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas? Three of the six (Nos. 2, 3, 6) have not a single movement in any other than the Tonic key. Two of them (1 and 5), have movements in respectively relative major and relative minor keys, and in no other; whilst only *one* of them (No. 4), has a movement requiring both a different tonic and a different key signature from those used at the beginning of the Sonata. So far, no modern master could more closely follow the old English voluntary traditions than Mendelssohn did. But in addition to this, the fugato or fugal

movement is only absent from one of the Sonatas (No. 5), and the formal construction of the movements labelled "fugue" by the composer, may be said to be scarcely less free than the fugato movements S. Wesley wrote on the old Lully model. *All six* of the Sonatas contain a single slow movement in Simple Binary form, and No. 4 has an additional movement (the *Allegretto*) written in this form. Another point of similarity to the English Voluntary style is the *length* of the movements, for Mendelssohn has scarcely exceeded the duration limits of Russell and Wesley; indeed some of Russell's Fugues are nearly or quite as long as the first movement of the 3rd Sonata, and the last movement of the 5th. Even in respect of the introduction of extraneous thematic material (melodies of Chorals), the old English writers may be said to have anticipated Mendelssohn; S. Wesley introduces Byrd's Canon, *Non nobis Domine*, into his 4th Voluntary, and a melody by Stephen Paxton into his 5th; whilst his brother, Charles Wesley, frequently introduces themes by Handel and Purcell into his written Voluntaries. Russell also writes a fugue upon a subject by Haydn in his 22nd Voluntary.

The only point which seems to have been overlooked by Mendelssohn would seem to be the system of unequal temperament which prevailed so largely in England at the time that his Sonatas were written. The first three movements in Sonata I would for example induce the dreadful "wolf" to appear and make his presence felt in a very disagreeable manner. The reason why Mendelssohn called his pieces "Sonatas" rather than Voluntaries may be thus suggested: knowing the conservative character of the English musical taste of his day, he might well be supposed to have asked himself, "how will the English people receive

a set of Voluntaries which, while conforming to the mere outward formal design of such pieces, differs from them so widely in style and in treatment of the organ?" As a matter of fact the Sonatas were slow in becoming known in England. Mr. Edwards states that the well known critic Chorley, in recording a performance of No. 1 by Mr. W. T. Best upon Willis's organ in the Great Exhibition of 1851, wrote: "The noble organ sonata was new to us." And this after six years from the date of publication! Being somewhat in doubt as to the advisability of using the term *Voluntary*, Mendelssohn may have looked about him for some more appropriate title. *Suite* would have been even more antiquated than "Sonata;" and, apart from all consideration of the use of ancient dance forms and rhythms, the plan of many of the old English Voluntaries, although based upon the Suite, differed from it very materially, inasmuch as one movement frequently led into the next without coming to a full close on its own account. [See for examples, Sonatas I and II.] The term *Sonata* (immediate successor of the Suite), would naturally claim his next attention; and we may fairly assume that Mendelssohn, in using this term for his organ pieces, was thinking of the *earlier* specimens of the great cyclical design—as it was presented to the world before Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven had set their respective marks upon it. And, of course, he was no more *bound* to use the *later* movement patterns, than a modern Gothic architect would be bound to erect a new Cathedral in the Perpendicular style, rather than in that of the First Pointed or Early English style.

Mendelssohn does not appear to have considered the modern first movement form sufficiently convenient or desirable for organ solo treatment—at least, upon the organs of his day. First movement

form, when applied to organ music, must always mean a certain amount of tone contrast, and these differences in tone intensity and colour have to be effected by quick changes of mechanism, and more often than not, in *lumps* rather than in well-balanced and regular gradations of tone as in the orchestra, or even on the pianoforte. The genius of the organ is altogether different. Kaleidoscopic tone changes *can*, of course, be produced upon it ; but to make an organ *sound like an organ*, continuity and smoothness of tone, intensity and quality, are amongst the very first things to be desired. Violent or sudden tone changes can be effectively used as Mendelssohn uses them in the first movement of Sonata I ; but it will be noticed that the first violent change is made at the *end* of a very important section of the movement—the close of the first part—where some break in the treatment of the music is as *necessary* as it is desirable, for the clear definition of the formal design of the work. But even then, Mendelssohn is careful to *carry on* this idea of contrast by means of his numerous antiphonal effects, obtained by alternating fragments of his two chief subjects—a device which, when once started, he carries on to the conclusion of the movement.

Other reasons for Mendelssohn's avoidance of modern "first movement form" will be clearly seen as we proceed with the analysis of the Sonatas one by one. This we propose to give in connection with suggestions for the effective rendering of these monumental compositions.



## CHAPTER II.

## SONATA I, IN F MINOR AND MAJOR.

THIS (says Mr. F. G. Edwards) was originally No. 3 of the Set, the Sonata in A being the first to be composed. Mendelssohn inverted the order in his proof copy, for what reason it is difficult to see.

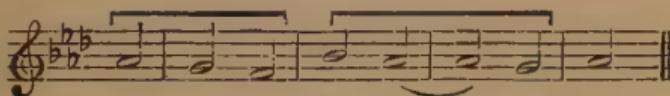
The general plan of this Sonata seems to readily afford two opportunities—in the opening and closing movements respectively—for the introduction of the constructive design commonly known as “first movement” or “Sonata” form, and yet Mendelssohn saw fit to avail himself of neither opportunity. In the first movement he really does seem to get somewhat near to Sonata form, inasmuch as he makes use of two finely contrasted subjects—the *first* of a grand majestic character for Full Organ, the *second* of a quiet religious character, which he assigns to the softer stops of his Second Manual. But the movement is really only a modern development of the Ancient Binary form used by the older classical composers, and—as we have also seen—by the old School of English organists in their written grand voluntaries. What may be called the “Second subject”—that beautiful choral melody which begins in A $\sharp$  (the relative major key), *does not occur in the first part of the movement* which distinctly closes with the cadence in C minor, at bar 40 (where the five-staved score begins). It is

an essential feature of modern Sonata form that the second subject shall form an integral portion of the first part or "exposition" of the movement (see E. Prout's *Applied Forms*, p. 156, § 268). The plan of the movement before us may be thus described :—

*Part I, Introduction ending on the first crotchet of bar 11.* These opening bars may be fitly termed "Introduction," because their subject matter is neither used nor alluded to elsewhere in the movement, unless indeed some kind of fanciful Wagnerian connection may be traced between the bold opening three chord figure :—



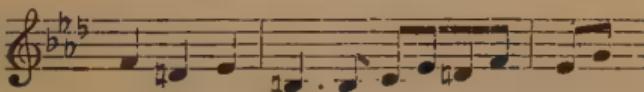
and the differently accented melody notes of the second strain of the choral (bars 46–50) :—



*Principal Subject.*—At bar 11 the real business of the movement commences with the announcement of the fugal theme which forms the first and more important subject :—



This subject is wrought fugally until the first part of the movement is brought to a full close in the dominant key of C minor at bar 40. The answer to this Fugato subject is worthy the attention of musical students :—



The perfect 4th between the first two notes of the Subject is replied to by an *imperfect concord* (minor 3rd), the D $\sharp$  (fifth of Dominant of C minor) answering G (fifth of Dominant of F minor). This is somewhat against rule; but it must be confessed that were C the second note of the answer, the effect would not be really as good.

*Part II* opens with what has been termed above the Second Subject—the Choral Melody *\*Was mein Gott will, das gescheh allezeit*, the presentation and treatment of which is interrupted and elaborated by fragmentary outbursts of the Fugal Theme (Subject I) in various ways both direct and inverted. There is no sign of recapitulation or of repetition discernible anywhere during the course of the movement.

It will be readily seen from the above analysis, that in its *bare outlines*, this fine movement is no more modern in form than is—let us say—Bach's Prelude in G  $\sharp$  minor (No. 42 of the *Wohltemperirtes Klavier*) which begins thus:—



And as far as the introduction of new material at the beginning of the second part of a movement in the old fashioned Binary form is concerned, we can easily see that Mendelssohn had precedent for this, if we look at the very familiar example quoted by Prof. E. Prout, on p. 174 of his treatise on *Form*—the *Adagio* to Mozart's Pianoforte Sonata in F. Accordingly in this movement Mendelssohn did not get beyond the forms used by our old English organists in their voluntaries.

The *Adagio* in A  $\sharp$  which follows, is another simple Binary form which may be thus analyzed:—

*Part I*, a 16 bar sentence ending on the crotchet chord in bar 16.

*Part II* (modulatory and recapitulatory), beginning with the quaver chord in bar 16, and ending on the first quaver in bar 64; to which succeeds a *Coda* of 15 bars built entirely upon a Tonic pedal.

An exact prototype of the plan of this movement (minus the Coda) can be seen in Haydn's *Allegretto* from his Quartett in G, Op. 64, No. 4, quoted by Prof. E. Prout on pp. 161-2 of his treatise on *Form*.

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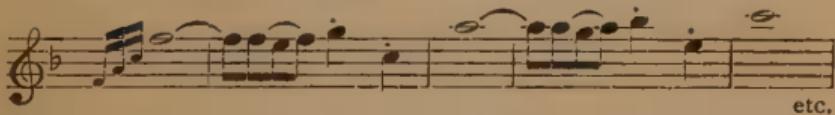
\* In his original autograph copy, Mendelssohn writes the name of this Choral above the music in bars 40-44.

The *Andante Recitativo* is of an intermezzo character, suggesting the idea of a dialogue in which questions plaintively asked by the imitative passages on the Swell are answered by the bold "First Species" chords on the Great organ. At the beginning of bar forty-one, the imitative passages (now heard for the last time) become a strict little 2 in 1 Canon for four bars.

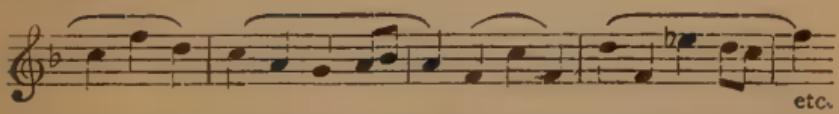
The form of the final movement *Allegro assai vivace* is ancient in design, although the style of the music is undoubtedly modern. It is a very simple Binary plan which may be thus briefly summarized :—

*Part I* ends with the Tonic harmony in bar 55.

*Part II* begins in this same bar with a partial presentation of the opening arpeggio subject over which is superposed a sort of counter-subject beginning thus :—



out of which at the second crotchet of bar 68 grows what may be called (for want of a better term) the "second subject" of the movement—the very melodious one which begins :—



and which continues in favour until the end of the movement.

The *Coda* (largely built on a Tonic pedal) begins at bar 122.

We plainly see that this *Finale* differs from modern Sonata form exactly in the same respect as the first movement differs from it, viz., the *second subject is not heard at all in the first part of the movement*. Moreover, it appears here in the same key as that of the first subject, viz., the Tonic, and in no other.

Now what did Mendelssohn *gain* by this complete avoidance of modern Sonata form in this his first Organ Sonata? Clearly, in the first place, *continuity* and an entire escape from that "fussiness" which but too often disfigures the use of Sonata form in modern organ music; and in the second place *brevity*. Surely one of the chief essentials of any successful movement written for the organ is that it shall *not be too long*. And since it is next to impossible to make a really good *short* movement when its plan requires an exposition with two subjects and a bridge, to say nothing of "accessories," "perorations," &c., a sufficient "development section," an intelligible "recapitulation of both subjects and a final "coda," many of us will agree that Mendelssohn was wise in avoiding all use of modern "Sonata form." He did not wish his pieces to sink to the *Sonatina* level of brusque though concise abruptness; and he was sufficiently master of the requirements and æsthetic capabilities of the organ (not only of his own time, but of *all* time) to avoid writing movements of inordinate length. Concerning this judicious brevity Dr. Gauntlett wrote in the *Morning Chronicle* of March 12th, 1846:—

"The epoch for expansion . . . . has passed away; the novelties of knotty points and subtle analysis has passed away; we want strong emotion, but it must be concentrated—it must strike sudden as the electric fluid—it must draw blood."

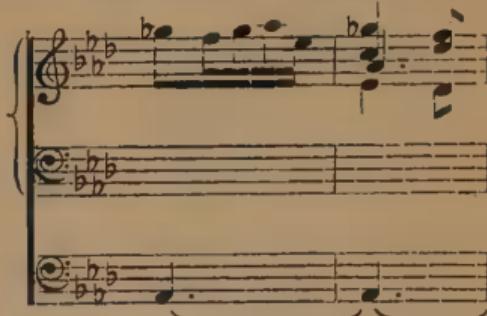
If this was true in 1846, it is probably even more true at the beginning of this 20th century. A few words on the rendering of this fine Sonata may be helpful to the earnest student. A MS. copy of five of the Sonatas in Mendelssohn's own autograph (now in the possession of Mr. Arthur O'Leary) is mainly written on *two* staves, the pedal part being indicated by the word "Ped." Even in

the three-staved copy, as now published, a great deal of the music is written on *two staves only*. It is probable that Mendelssohn *may* have had some idea of giving those English organists of his own time, who were *not pedal players*, some chance of being able to perform his Sonatas on the *manual claviers only*. If we examine the music right through with this notion in view, it is astonishing to find how much of it can be easily played upon the manuals without using the pedals at all. For example, the manual part of the first two bars is quite complete without the pedal, and in the next two bars—as well as in many other places in this and the remaining Sonatas—the middle or left hand staff of the score is *empty*. But in all such cases, the student is advised not to play with R.H. and feet only, but to use his left hand for the performance of at least the lowest notes on the top staff of the score. The late Mr. W. T. Best in his edition of the Sonatas has somewhat unwarrantably printed many of these L.H. passages upon the middle staff, excusing his presumption in his preface by saying that Mendelssohn's method of writing these works was “probably the result of hurry in placing his ideas upon paper.” The absurdity of this notion is apparent to anyone who remembers how fastidious Mendelssohn was with respect to the writing of his music, for in a letter to Mr. Coventry (his publisher) dated May 26th, 1845, the composer writes :—

“ Pray let the engraver be most careful in order to get a correct edition. I attach much importance to these Sonatas (if I may say so of any work of mine) and accordingly wish them to be brought out as correctly as possible. Perhaps some one of my English friends and brother organists would look them over for me besides the usual corrections of the proofs.”

From bar 95 there are no less than eleven consec-

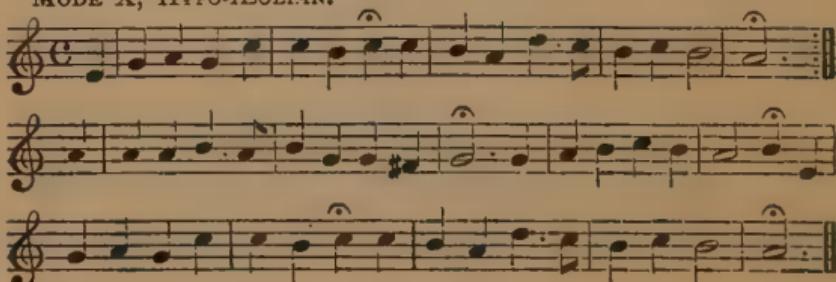
utive bars of the middle staff quite empty of notes, but the absence of rests ought to be quite sufficient to show that Mendelssohn intended the L.H. to be usefully employed in helping the R.H. to perform with ease and certainty the notes written on the top staff. The only bar in Sonata I which will not admit of this explanation is bar 67 of the *Adagio*:-



which always sounds rather thin and empty in performance. I can only attempt to explain the entire cessation of middle parts by the apparent desire of Mendelssohn to secure a certain amount of freshness for the dominant harmony of the *following* bar, by here dropping his middle accompaniment entirely.

The Choral *Was mein Gott* (What, my God, may always happen) in the first movement is a 16th century tune of French extraction. It is used by Bach\* at the end of his Church Cantata for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany in this shape:-

MODE X, HYPO-ÆOLIAN.



\* Bach also uses it in five other Church Cantatas, and once in the S. Matthew Passion (No. 31).

For several reasons it is better to interpret Mendelssohn's direction, "Clav. II," as indicating the *Choir* rather than the Swell Manual. In the first place, the use of the Choir necessitates no reduction of Swell Stops for the *mezzo piano*, and no consequent weakening of the concluding chord of Part I of the movement, out of which the Choral *grows*. [I assume that the Full Swell has been coupled to the Full Great up to this point.] In the second place the use of the Choir prevents any "pumping" of the Swell, which would effectually ruin Mendelssohn's idea of contrast: the calm, passionless tones of the Choir organ standing out in prayerful relief against the frequent interruptions of the brilliant Great and Swell combined. In bars 71-75, play the manual parts thus:—

In the *Adagio*, "Clav. I" may be taken to mean Swell (soft 8 ft. and Reed), "Clav. II"—Choir (Dulciana). From bar 49, play L.H. on Great, (Clarabella or Stopped Diapason), as far as the second quaver of bar 57. In bar 16 (and in similar passages following), play the first minim chord R.H., the second L.H., in order to get the R.H. back to Clav. II (Swell *Voix Celeste*) for the *pp*. Be careful to observe the *tenuto* directions given by the composer, but remove the *ff* chord sharply (with its notes ceasing *altogether*) exactly at the conclusion of the fourth crotchet beat. At the conclusion of Mr. Edwards' paper, read to the Musical Association on Nov. 13, 1894, the President (Sir John Stainer) said, "The speed at which the

*Finale* of the First Sonata is taken must depend a great deal upon the size of the building, although Mendelssohn said it was to go as fast as possible. In S. Paul's Cathedral I found it necessary to play it slowly."

During the rest for the pedal in bars 77-79 the Swell might be gradually closed, and it might remain closed until bar 102, when it might be gradually opened again, so as to obtain a magnificent crescendo up to the Dominant 7th which begins in bar 108 over the descending quavers. An effect of climax might be produced by coupling the heavy pressure Solo reeds to the Great at the second crotchet in bar 112, uncoupling them again for the first bar of the Coda (bar 122), and bringing them on once more for the last two chords of the Sonata. Mr. Edwards states that "the crotchet rest in the penultimate bar was an afterthought, the chord originally (in Mendelssohn's first copy) occupied the whole bar; and the final chord contained that extra F (first space, treble staff) which so many organists naturally (but supererogatively) put in."

Some years ago, Dr. A. L. Peace remarked, "the last movement in Mendelssohn's First Organ Sonata is one of the finest organ pieces ever written, but it is absolutely *sui generis*—the only thing of its kind."



SACRAMENTO:

CHAPTER III.

SECOND SONATA. IN G MINOR AND MAJOR.

OF the entire set of Six Sonatas, the second appears to bear the closest resemblance to the old English Voluntary-forms which Mendelssohn at the first instance undertook to write in. The opening *Grave* movement, ending as it does with a Half Close upon the Dominant chord, is a mere Introduction to the *Adagio* which immediately follows; the *Allegro maestoso e vivace* (3) in the tonic Major key (which is a movement complete in itself) may be regarded as a Prelude to the concluding Fugue.

The *Grave* is about the same length as the introductory movement of the average English Voluntary; its 23 bars being possibly divisible into two parts by the inverted Tonic Cadence in bar 10.\* The material used by the composer in the construction of this movement consists entirely of a brief thematic development of these two phrases (a), (b):—

(a)

(b)

either being capable of use as an invertible counterpoint to the other. The inverted Dominant Pedal at the end of the *Grave* is one of several interesting

\* An incomplete bar at the beginning of a movement is not counted; by Bar 1, is meant the *first complete bar*.

specimens of its kind which we meet with in these sonatas.

The *Adagio* grows out of the *Grave* by the appearance of the Dominant Pedal in the highest part of the score, and the slight melodic resemblance of the following passage to the second principal phrase of the *Grave*. Compare (c) with (b):—



The *Adagio* is a Binary form, of which the first part ends in the fifteenth bar with the full close in the key of B-flat major (minor 7th of the Tonic). There is a brief recapitulation of the opening phrase (see Fig. c above) towards the end of the second part of the movement (bar 29, second half), and the Coda begins at the full close in the Tonic key (bar 37, first quaver). Mr. Edwards states that this movement was originally written in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time (in notes of double length, crotchets for quavers, &c.), and that the Coda in Mendelssohn's first MS. ran as follows:—

The Coda score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for 'Clav. I.', the third is for 'Clav. II.', and the bottom is for 'Ped.'. The music is in G major, 2/4 time. The Clav. I. parts feature eighth-note patterns, while the Clav. II. and Pedal parts provide harmonic support. The score is divided into two sections, with the Clav. II. and Pedal parts appearing in the second section.

The *Allegro maestoso* is constructed according to the following formula—A + B + A + B + A + Coda. The movement has therefore an approximation to Rondo form in which the principal theme occurs thrice, and the Episode twice. A (the principal theme) is a subject of 16 bars' length the first time it is heard, but it is curtailed to 8 bars' length each time it subsequently recurs. B (the Episode) begins at bar 16, third beat, in the Dominant key, but ends each time it occurs in the Mediant minor key, from which tonality the principal subject is resumed with wonderful freshness and brightness. The Coda (which begins at the interrupted close upon the Submediant harmony in bar 51, third beat) is chiefly constructed from the thematic material of the fifth and following bars of the principal theme. Mr. Edwards states that the dots to the quavers, which form such a strongly marked feature of the movement, were afterthoughts of the composer, who wrote the principal theme in his first MS. thus :—



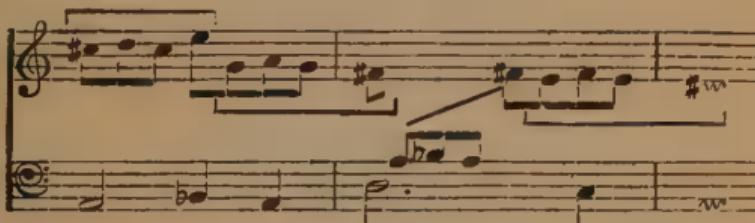
The concluding movement is labelled "Fugue" by the composer, but its construction and part-writing are so free in their character as to closely resemble the *Fugato* movements of Russell, Adams, S. Wesley, and the older voluntary writers. I remember Professor Prout telling me that at the time he was writing his treatise on *Fugal Analysis* he fully intended including this Fugue in C major as one of his analyzed specimens, but relinquished this intention in favour of the Organ Fugue in D minor (Op. 37, No. 3). The reason for this change is possibly given on p. 77 of the treatise referred to :—

" Mendelssohn was in many respects so consummate a master of composition, that it is surprising to find the part-writing in his instrumental fugues very loose—we were almost going to say slipshod. Some of the fugues in the organ sonatas and in the pianoforte works defy all attempts to put them into score; the parts cross in the most perplexing way, or appear and disappear suddenly in the middle of a phrase."

Mr. Edwards states that the subject of this fugue is the same as that of one of three organ fugues composed by Mendelssohn in 1839 (MS. dated "Frankfurt, d. 14 Juli, 1839"), five years before the sonatas were written; but the exposition and subsequent treatment of the fugue are quite different in this sonata as compared with the earlier version. Its melodic outline probably supplied the amateur composer of the once too-popular "Jerusalem the golden," with an inspiration for the first line of his clumsily manufactured hymn tune in D major (See *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 228). The first thing about this fugue which strikes a musician is the quickened (quaver) pulsation of the accompanying Third Species Counterpoint, which, beginning at the thirty-ninth bar, is maintained from this point until nearly the very end of the fugue. Mendelssohn appears to have been rather fond of this method of fugue-construction—a method which certainly heightens the interest of the composition from the listener's point of view—as the fugue unfolds its mystic intricacy to the aural perception. We shall see a similar application of this method in the Third Sonata, and the student will doubtless remember other instances of its use in the Overture to *S. Paul*, and in the Pianoforte Fugues in E minor and A $\sharp$  major (Op. 35, Nos. 1 and 4). The second (or modulating) section of this fugue would seem to begin at bar 22. Here, and at bar 33, we have entries of the theme in the supertonic

key of D major, but *harmonized with the Dominant tonality of G major*. This *plagal* use of the theme seems to have afforded the composer considerable satisfaction, for he does the same thing in D minor at bar 43, and in A minor at bar 48. The Fugue is very scantily furnished with episodes, but there is a fine sequential passage of an episodical character in bars 63-68, where the first two bars of the theme are contrapuntally accompanied by the persistent quaver figure which is obviously derived from the theme by *diminution* :—

(Principal Parts only),



The Stretto points in the fugue consist of one of a whole bar's distance in bars 55 and 56, and another of half a bar's distance in bars 72 and 73. The Coda begins at the cessation of the quaver pulsation in bar 96. It may be safely said that whatever this Fugue may lose in the clearness of its part-writing, it undoubtedly gains by its breadth of style and its cumulative interest. Reviewing the Second Sonata as a whole, one cannot resist the notion that it very closely answers to a description of Mendelssohn's extemporaneous playing as set forth in an earlier portion of the article from the *Musical World* of Sept. 15th, 1837, to which I drew attention in Chapter I :—

“ The first ten minutes is a trying situation for the popular organist, closely pressed on all sides, as he generally is, surrounded by persons not less excited than himself, by the promise of no ordinary intellectual gratification ; and often

by friends whose good opinions he is well assured he has had unreservedly surrendered to him. Genius, however mighty, is ever modest ; and even the mind of a Mendelssohn does not instantaneously escape from the scene : hence *his opening movements are distinguished for seriousness and solemnity* : the perfect purity of his harmonies, the natural manner in which they follow each other, the rigid exclusion of every note not exclusively belonging to them, and their perfect unity one with the other, however, proclaim the refined and accomplished scholar, with whom art has become second nature ; and as his thoughts thicken, and the spirit retires to commune within itself, the *themes break forth one by one*, and a warmth and energy, a freedom and fluency diffuse a life, and spread a charm over his performance, that at once rivet the individual attention of his auditors.

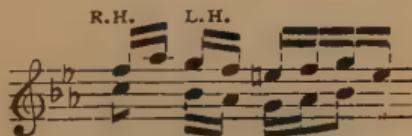
In writing this Second Sonata for an English publisher, Mendelssohn was fully conscious of the conservative character of the English musical taste of that day—when the love of Handel's style and manner reigned almost supreme in our land. Little wonder then, that in using the title “Sonata” for his English organ pieces he naturally turned the current of his ideas into the formal designs which characterize the *earlier specimens* of the great cyclical Art Form as presented to the world before Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven had set their respective marks upon it. For, as a distinguished modern composer (Mr. Algernon Ashton) puts the matter—*A sonata is a sonata if from beginning to end the music breaths the true sonata spirit*—which this Second Sonata of Mendelssohn most assuredly does.

A few words will suffice by way of practical suggestions for the effective rendering of this Second Sonata upon an average modern organ. The *Grave* might be played upon Gt. to Principal with Full Swell coupled, or in the case of a large organ the Swell stops might be limited to Diapasons and other 8 ft. registers, Principal 4 ft., and Oboe 8 ft. At bar 20, the Swell might

be uncoupled, and the Gt. reduced. Notice that the crotchet G (Swell Oboe and Stopped Diapason) in the last bar (23) comes *after* the pause on the minim chord of the Dominant. This chord should be played with the left hand, and should cease sounding as soon as the 4th finger of the right hand has depressed the upper G. Nothing should be heard but this single note G for the space of a crotchet and a semiquaver of the *Adagio* tempo. The composer's "Clav. I" in the first bar of the *Adagio* may be taken to mean *Choir Dulciana*. Play the passage beginning in the bass clef (bar 7) with the L.H. on a soft Great 8 ft. stop transferring the semiquavers of the Choir to the R.H., so :—



The melody beginning with the high F in bar 15 should be taken on the Sw. with the L.H., returning to the Gt. with the reappearance of the Bass clef two bars later, and returning to the Swell with the R.H. when the Treble clef appears again. The L.H. might resume the semiquaver movement on the Choir manual thus :—



In bar 32 the upper notes of the highest staff can be taken on the Gt. with the 4th finger of the right hand, whilst the thumb and 1st finger of the same hand play the lower notes. The melody might return to the Swell at the first semiquaver of bar 35.

The *Allegro maestoso* should be commenced with Gt. to 15th with Full Swell for the first eight bars, increased to Full organ at the ninth bar. This should be reduced at the beginning of the Episode, but might be gradually added to until the Full organ is again reached at the reappearance of the principal theme each time it recurs. The Coda might be taken in a *diminuendo* manner. The Fugue should be commenced with Gt. 8 ft. with Sw. (8 and 4 ft. with Oboe) coupled. Gt. 4 ft. might be added when the quavers appear in bar 39; 16 ft. with Full Swell might be added at the short two-bar Episode in bar 53, and the 2 ft. four bars later. From this point the Sw. box might be gradually opened with the right foot, and the Sw. pedal fixed down at the beginning of bar 63. Mixtures might be brought on at bar 76, and the Full organ at the Coda (bar 96). With a large cathedral or concert hall organ, the heavy pressure Solo reeds might be added at the final appearance of the theme in bar 102.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THIRD SONATA, IN A MAJOR.

As before stated, this Sonata was the first one of the six to be written. Its two movements are respectively dated "Aug. 9" and "Aug. 17, 1844." Mr. Edwards states that Mendelssohn "evidently wished to incorporate into it a movement he had written for his sister Fanny's wedding during his visit to Wales in 1829," for in a letter addressed to his sister (Fanny Hensel) dated "Soden, July 25, 1844," the composer writes:—

"Look out for the organ piece in A major that I composed for your wedding, and wrote out in Wales, and send it to me immediately; you shall positively have it back, but I require it. I have promised an English publisher to furnish him with a whole book of organ pieces; and as I was writing out one after another, that former one recurred to me. I like the beginning, but detest the middle, and am re-writing it with another choral fugue; but should like to compare it with the original, so pray send it here. . . . Do not forget the organ piece, and still less its author."

This wedding piece not being forthcoming, Mendelssohn wrote again to his sister on Aug. 15, 1844, asking her to make a further search for the MS., but as we have seen above, the third sonata was completed only two days after this second letter was written, and before Mrs. Hensel had even time to reply to it.

Sir C. Hubert H. Parry says of the form of the first movement of this Sonata:—

"The form in its broadest significance amounts to a correspondence of well-defined sections at the beginning and end with a long passage of 'free fantasia,' fugally developed in the middle. . . . The corresponding divisions at either end

are long, and strongly contrasted in the modern quality and more simultaneous motion of the parts, with the elaborate fugal structure of the middle division."

From this description it will be readily seen that the *Con moto maestoso* may be regarded as a Ternary design, thus:—

*Division I.*—Principal Theme: itself a complete Binary design, of which Part I ends with bar 8, and Part II (which opens with the passage in single notes for "Clav. II") at bar 24, on the minim chord before the change of key-signature.

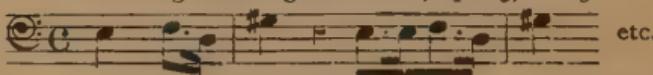
*Division II.*—Episode—a finely developed double fugue with the old German Choral *Aus tiefer Noth* treated as a Canto Fermo in the bass.

*Division III.*—A *free* recapitulation of Division I in which the original Part I is shortened to 4 bars (instead of 8), the passage originally in single notes is now given in "Clav. II" with full harmony, and answered in B minor instead of F $\sharp$  major (as at first). The Coda which begins in bar 127 (third crotchet) contains two reminiscences of the fugal subject worked out in Division II.

The stately opening subject (Division I) in the Tonic Major has thus all the effect of a *Prelude* recapitulated in substance rather than *verbatim* at the end of the Fugue (Division II).

The construction of the Fugue will amply repay the close attention of the student. In the first place, the melodic resemblance of its subject to at least two other themes previously used by the composer scarcely needs pointing out:—

*From Fugue in Organ Sonata, Op. 65, No. 3.*



*From the Violin Concerto, Op. 64.*



*From the Lobgesang, Op. 52.*

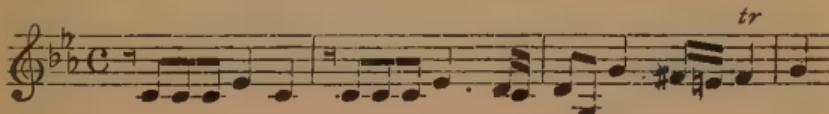


Watchman! will the night soon pass?....

The chronological proximity of Op. 64 and 65 (both quoted above) is perhaps not without signi-

ficance. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, this fugue is constructed on that particular plan which seems to have found so much favour with the composer, viz., the adoption of a quickened *moto perpetuo* pulsation towards the middle of the fugue. But the application of this *modus operandi* is widely different in the fugue under notice to that which we observed in the final movement of the Second Sonata. *There*, the quicker notes were derived by a process of diminution from the subject of the Fugue itself; and were used against the constantly recurring entries of the Subject as a continuous Third Species Counterpoint to the same. *Here*, in the Third Sonata, when the quicker notes make their appearance, in bar 58, they form the Second Subject of the Double Fugue, of which the Second Exposition may be said to end on the first quaver of bar 66. [Notice incidentally that the Subject of this Second Exposition is in A minor, the *answer* (see bars 60 and 61) is in the Sub-dominant key of D minor—not in the Dominant key as in the first Exposition, bars 28 to 32.]

This Double Fugue is constructed upon very much the same plan as Bach's well known Double Fugue in C minor for the Organ, which begins thus:—



Its formal outline is as follows:—

*Part I.*—Exposition and working of First Subject, bars 24 to 58

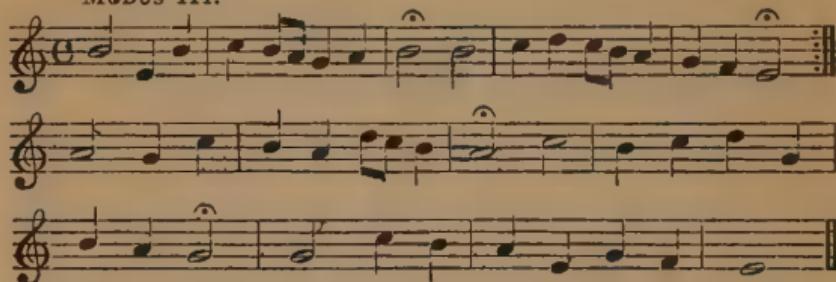
*Part II.*—Exposition and working of Second Subject, bars 58 to 80.

*Part III.*—Union and final development of both Subjects, bars 80 to 99.

*Coda.*—From bars 99 to 112, the last four bars of which are a pedal cadenza leading back to the recapitulation of the First Division of the movement.

An important feature of this Double Fugue is that until the end of the Coda, bar 107, neither of the two subjects is heard upon the Pedal Organ, the use of which is entirely devoted throughout all three sections of the Fugue to the enunciation—in slow stately crotchet pulsation—of the melody of the old German Choral, *Aus tiefer Noth schrei zu dir* (Psalm 130):—

## MODUS III.



This beautiful but severe Phrygian melody (undoubtedly of ancient origin) was annexed by Martin Luther and set by him to a metrical German translation of the *De Profundis*. It has been used by J. S. Bach in his Cantata for the 21st Sunday after Trinity, where it is treated fugally for four voices, with a *Basso continuo* largely of an independent character, and with the theme used by augmentation (whole bar notes) in the Treble part of the Fugue in detached phrases, very much as Mendelssohn used it in the pedal part of his Third Sonata.

Handel uses the melody of this Choral as a Canto Fermo against a fugue with two subjects, in an Anthem which he wrote for the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital, London; but perhaps no more poetical use has ever been made of it than that to which it has been put by the late Gustav Merkel in his Organ Sonata in E minor (Op. 137) in which he charmingly brings the idea of the *De Profundis* into juxtaposition with the Morning

Star of Hope (*Wie schon leucht' uns der Morgenstern*) :—



Professor Prout, with his usual acumen, observes, that “in no place throughout the fugue in Mendelssohn’s Third Organ Sonata is either of the subjects *in its entirety* ever combined with the Choral.” Why Mendelssohn should have chosen this austere old Lutheran tune as one of the chief themes of the first Organ Sonata he wrote in fulfilment of his English commission is all the more unaccountable when he read his own description of his joyous *al fresco* life at Soden during the time he was writing his organ sonatas :—

“ SODEN, near FRANKFORT a/M.  
July 22nd, 1844.

After my mad, most mad life in England—for never before was anything like this season—we never went to bed before half-past one, every hour of every day was filled with engagements three weeks beforehand, and I got through more music in two months than in all the rest of the year—this life at Soden, with its eating and sleeping, without dress-coat, without piano, without visiting cards, without carriage and horses ; but with donkeys, with wild flowers, with music-paper and sketch-book, with Cecile and the children, is doubly refreshing.”

That Mendelssohn’s mind was one which delighted itself in violent contrasts cannot be doubted when we contemplate him writing the animated opening movement and vivacious Finale of the *Italian Symphony* amid the solitude and desolation of the ruins of Rome, and composing the religiously solemn *Andante* of the same Symphony amid the gay life and bustle of Naples ! He may even—like Gustav Merkel—have had some definite “programme” in view when planning out

his Third Organ Sonata ; if the juxtaposition of the Lutheran *De Profundis* and his own " Watchman " motif with the courageous hopefulness of his opening Subject in A major, and the calm trustfulness of the concluding *Andante tranquillo* may be taken as the musical expression of any deep and hidden symbolical meaning, such as the following :—

In the morn of radiant beauty, when the sunshine and the rains  
Strew the path of life with flowers, fill the air with joyous strains ;  
Then the hoping heart looks onward to a noon of cloudless blue,  
And a calm and mellow setting at the fall of evening dew.

But the mid-day cloud soon gathers, and the sky is overcast,  
And the disappointed heart recoils beneath the thunder-blast ;  
Then the soul in sorrow droopeth, for hope visits her no more,  
In the long and dreary waiting on the desolate sea shore.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the feeble spirit fainteth at the world's tumultuous din ;  
When the breaking heart is cold and dark with sorrow and  
with sin ;

Give, O give the warmth that cherishes beneath the winter's frown,  
Send, O send the Light that fadeth not, the Sun that goes not  
down.

But whatever may have been his æsthetic intention there can be no doubt that Mendelssohn " seems to have divined that the usual instrumental forms of large scope were unsuited to the genius of the organ, and therefore he returned to structural principles of a date before these forms had become prominent or definite."—(Parry).

The concluding *Andante*—a " calm and mellow " ending to the Sonata—is a delightful little romance or *lied ohne worte* in Simple Binary form, of which Part I ends with the half close at the double bar Part II ends with the full close (second beat in bar 26), and the subsequent Coda is mainly built over a Tonic Pedal.

When rendering this Sonata upon a good modern organ, the Full Great with Full Swell coupled may (according to the composer's own directions) be effectively employed for the opening of the First

Movement. Clav. II may be taken to mean Solo Tuba 8 ft. When the Tonic minor key is reached in bar 24, the Swell box should be closed, and both Gt. and Sw. reduced to 8 ft. and 4 ft. only with an 8 ft. reed (or some other stop of a distinctive quality of tone) drawn on the Pedal organ for the adequate presentation of the *Aus tiefer Noth Canto Fermo*. The amount of organ tone may be increased on both manuals at the treble entry in bar 36. A further increase of tone can be judiciously effected when the semiquavers begin in bar 58. During the 9 bars rest for the Pedal organ (58 to 67), a good and gradual crescendo can be obtained by opening the Swell box with the right foot, fixing down the Swell pedal at the crotchet rest in bar 68, just before the Choral is resumed on the Pedal organ. The Gt. Mixtures can be added at the beginning of bar 97, the Full Great being reserved for the return of the Tonic major key in bar 113. "Clav. II" in the two bars, 117, 118, may be taken to mean Full Swell *open*. The heavy pressure Solo reeds may be advantageously added for the two semibreve chords which form the concluding cadence of the movement. The *Andante tranquillo* should be commenced upon the soft 8 and 4 ft. stops of the Swell, going on with both hands to Great soft 8 ft. with Swell coupled on the third beat of the fourth complete bar of the movement. Go back to the Swell at the double bar, and to the Great on the third beat of bar 12. Resume Swell both hands on the third beat of bar 20. Take the upper notes of the quaver passage beginning on the third beat of bar 26 on a Choir Solo Stop of 8 ft. *single notes only with R.H.* (the rest of the Manual part with the L.H.). Both hands Choir for bar 32 to second beat of bar 34. The responsive phrases in the last seven bars may be alternated between Great and Swell, or Choir, Great, and Swell.

## CHAPTER V.

## FOURTH SONATA, IN B FLAT MAJOR.

IN a letter dated "Frankfort, August 29th, 1844," which Mendelssohn addressed to Mr. Coventry, the London publisher, he states that the first three sonatas were then nearly finished. In a subsequent letter dated May 1st, 1845, we read that the entire six sonatas had been completed "some weeks since." These two communications fix the date of the composition of the Fourth Sonata as being somewhere between September, 1844, and March or April, 1845. If the bright character of the music may be said to afford any clue, we may well suppose that Mendelssohn—whose musical mind delighted in *contrasts*—wrote this ever fresh and brilliant Sonata at a time when the worries, &c., of a busy exacting working term made a kind of dark background to the charming mental picture of his pleasant holiday life at Soden; which, with its happy recollection of "donkeys, wild flowers, music paper and sketch-book, Cecile and the children," and an entire exemption from the distracting conventionalities of "dress-coat, piano, visiting cards, carriage and horses" may have been "doubly refreshing." Dr. Gauntlett, writing in the *Morning Chronicle* of March 12th, 1846, remarked:—

"The Fourth Sonata will be the favourite in England, and, if not the most sublime, or the most passionate, is yet the most beautiful of all the six. The first movement is a

Hymn of Praise. It is a Bach Prelude, and yet not Bach. Mendelssohn treats him as Melville treats the great Nonconformists and their Cerberus-headed orations."

This reference to Bach is a significant one—as we shall see presently.

Here, in his Fourth Sonata, Mendelssohn gave himself two opportunities for writing a movement in what is commonly called now-a-days, "Sonata Form," viz., in the opening and concluding movements; *and yet he availed himself of neither.* In the first movement two subjects are distinctly brought forward; the first with the arpeggio figures:—



so strongly reminding one of the opening of Bach's Prelude in E? (No. 7 in Book I of the *Wohltemperirtes Klavier*):—



but the second—the familiar martial theme which makes its appearance at the opening of the *second part* of the movement—does not occur anywhere in the *first part*:—



There is a further resemblance between this movement and the Bach Prelude in E♭. J. S. B. introduces a Second Subject, which he works *fugally* :—



Mendelssohn also treats *his* Second Subject fugally. See bars 22 to 45 (and observe that the subject receives a *Subdominant* answer). Then, later on, in his Seventh Prelude, Bach combines his two subjects, thus :—

*First Subject.*

 A musical score for organ, featuring two staves. The top staff is in E♭ major and the bottom staff is in C major. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth note patterns, labeled 'First Subject.'.
 

*Second Subject.*

 A musical score for organ, featuring two staves. The top staff is in E♭ major and the bottom staff is in C major. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth note patterns, labeled 'Second Subject.'.

Mendelssohn does exactly the same thing in the 4th Sonata :—

*Second Subject.*

 A musical score for organ, featuring two staves. The top staff is in E♭ major and the bottom staff is in C major. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth note patterns, labeled 'Second Subject.'.
 

*First Subject.*

 A musical score for organ, featuring two staves. The top staff is in E♭ major and the bottom staff is in C major. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth note patterns, labeled 'First Subject.'.

See bars 48 to 63.

Here again, we may pause to observe that Mendelssohn, in writing for the organ, deliberately laid aside his modern ideas of formal design in favour of an art-plan which was ancient even in his days. The first movement of his Fourth Organ

Sonata, is, as we have just seen, identical in form with the Seventh Prelude of Bach. This is Mendelssohn's plan :—

TERNARY FORM.

PART I ends with full close in the Tonic Key at bar 22.

PART II (Episode or Second Subject) begins at bar 22 and ends at bar 48 with a half close in D minor.

PART III (which consists of an ingenious combination of Subjects 1 and 2) begins at bar 48, and ends with almost a verbatim recapitulation of the last six bars of Part I.

Dr. Gauntlett—apparently an acute sufferer from Nonconformist pulpit-oratory (if we may judge from the quotation from his *Morning Chronicle* review) could not have been thinking of this particular Bach Prelude (No. 7) when he remarked that Mendelssohn treated Bach as Melville treated his long-winded predecessors, since the Prelude consists of only 70 bars, while the Sonata movement has 84! Again, how different are the architectural proportions of the two composers :—

Bach :	Mendelssohn :
Prelude in E ♭, No. 7.	First Movement of Sonata IV.
PART I, 10 bars.	PART I, 22 bars.
„ II, 15 „	„ II, 26 „
„ III, 45 „	„ III, 36 „

In playing this movement upon a modern organ Parts I and III should be played upon Great to Fifteenth with Full Swell coupled, without using, however, the *heavier* manual 16 ft. stops, which would somewhat obscure the clearness of the continual arpeggio figures. Part II—the Episode, might be played Full organ, if desired.

The *Andante religioso* is a perfect example of a Simple Binary form, of which the first part ends, and the second part begins at the tenth bar. The first part is directed by the composer to be

played entirely upon "Clav. I" (Swell 8 ft. with Oboe). A good effect can, however, be obtained by picking out the L.H. phrase:—



upon a soft 8 ft. stop on the *Great*. In the Second Part, "Clav. II" may be taken to mean Clarinet or some Solo 8 ft. stop of a distinctive tone-colour upon either the Choir or Solo manual. The recapitulation of the L.H. phrase (shown above) may be transferred to the Great as before, and the *top part* of the score, from the twenty-eighth bar (2nd half) to the Full Close in the thirty-fourth bar, may be played upon a Choir Solo Stop (different to that used previously) with the Swell coupled. The concluding phrase:—



might be given with both hands upon the Voix Celeste or Swell Salicional.

The *Allegretto in F* which follows, is also a Simple Binary form:—

PART I ending on the first beat of bar 23

PART II ending on the first beat of bar 62.

CODA from bar 62 to end.

The Coda consists entirely of the Tonic note F sustained as an "inverted pedal" in the tenor part, whilst the "alto" (the "treble" whole-bar rests disappear at the third bar of the coda) continues the persistent semiquaver Third Species counterpoint to the third bar from the end of the movement.

But whilst the technical description of its form can be dismissed in a very few words, the poetical signification of this lovely movement would need

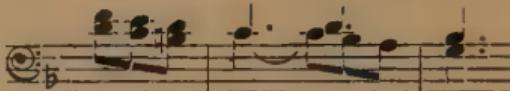
a whole volume to do it the barest justice. Perhaps in no other composition has Mendelssohn so absolutely and entirely opened his mind to us. Here we see the man entirely as God made him, bright, sunny, hopeful, and devotional. The *Allegretto* is a veritable *Frühlingslied*, written perhaps in the spring of 1845, when the composer may have felt :—

“ Now that the winter’s gone, the earth hath lost  
 Her snow-white robes, and now no more the frost  
 Candies the grass, or calls an icy cream  
 Upon the silver lake, or crystal stream.  
 But the warm sun thaws the benumb’d earth  
 And makes it tender ; gives a second birth  
 To the dead swallow ; wakes in hollow tree  
 The drowsy cuckoo, and the humble bee.  
 Now do a choir of chirping minstrels bring  
 In triumph to the world the youthful Spring.  
 The valleys, hills, and woods in rich array  
 Welcome the coming of the long’d for May.  
 Now all things smile.”

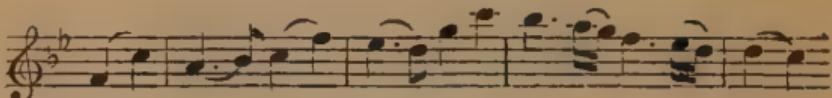
Certain it is that when the late Mr. W. S. Rockstro visited Mendelssohn at Frankfort in the spring of 1845, the composer proposed that they should go to an “open-air concert,” as he charmingly expressed it, as he led the way to a lonely corner of the public gardens where (says Mr. Rockstro) “a nightingale was singing with all its heart. ‘He sings here every evening,’ said Mendelssohn, ‘and I often come to hear him. I sit here sometimes when I want to compose. . . . I have just finished some sonatas for the organ.’”

Concerning the rendering of the *Allegretto*, it may be suggested that “Clav. I” means Choir Organ, and that the melody, which begins in the third bar, be taken either upon the same manual as the semiquaver counterpoint, or upon an 8 ft. stop of a solo character on the *Great*. The melody for left hand, which begins in bar 24, should be

assigned to a Swell Reed Solo, the semiquavers being continued on the Choir manual. This L.H. Solo might very well terminate on the first beat of bar 56, when the passage in thirds beginning :—



might be transferred to the Gt. 8 ft. Solo stop, which will then sustain the long 12-bar inverted pedal note F. The final *Allegro maestoso e vivace* presents many points of more than ordinary interest. Its opening theme is remarkable alike for a slight melodic resemblance to the first line of our National Anthem :—



and for its peculiar phrasing, which the composer insists upon at almost every repetition. This theme is accompanied by magnificent ascending scale passages in the bass, concerning which Dr. Gauntlett wrote in the article previously referred to :—“Dwell on the heart-quivering march up the pedal from the lower E $\flat$  to the F (apparently in bars 14–17) and then ‘give thanks’ and those ‘for ever.’” The imitative passage over the low dominant pedal F is singularly reminiscent of a somewhat similar device in the opening bars of the First Sonata (compare bars 8–12 with the first movement of Sonata I, bars 3–7). The general plan of this movement appears to me to be a kind of reproduction (on a somewhat smaller scale) of the plan of the first movement of the Third Sonata, viz., a Ternary design in which the middle or episodical section is a *fugato* preceded and followed by a subject of a preludial character.

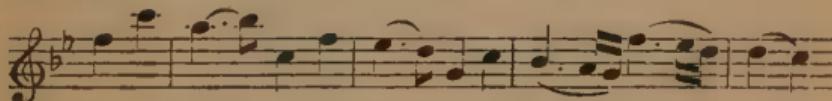
PART I ends on the first crotchet of bar 22.

PART II begins with the subject of the *Fugato* given out by the pedals in bar 22, and ends on the second beat of bar 83.

PART III, which begins on the third beat of bar 83, is a considerably condensed recapitulation of Part I (8 bars instead of 22), and there is no Coda.

It will be observed, however, that the plan of this movement differs from that of an ordinary Ternary design, inasmuch as the episodical portion begins and ends in the Tonic key.

Considerable discussion has sometimes arisen as to the accuracy of the answer which Mendelssohn gives to the subject of his *Fugato*. But, as this subject begins and ends in the Tonic key, there can be no doubt whatever that a real answer—which is given by the composer—is the only possible one. The incidental modulations of the subject to the Dominant and Supertonic minor keys (F major and C minor) are faithfully reproduced in the answer by the keys of C major and G minor. But there is one point about this movement which I have never heard explained with anything like satisfaction. I am perfectly unable to account for this distorted presentation of the subject (bars 83 to 87). :—



when the following would have been quite possible even on the limited upward compass of the organ in Mendelssohn's own day :—



The upward skip of a 7th from the semiquaver G always seems to have a very awkward effect; and it is quite easy to see how with a very slight

redistribution of the accompanying harmonies this might have been well avoided—to the manifest improvement of the passage.

In the autograph copy of this Sonata, now in the possession of Mr. Arthur O'Leary, in bar 42 of this movement, a  $\natural$  is prefixed to the first quaver B, of the top part. That this accidental has been inadvertently omitted from many of the printed editions is manifest, since an otherwise unmeaning accidental  $\flat$  is prefixed to the sixth quaver of this bar. The autograph also contains *three additional bars*, which come between bars 47 and 48 of the printed editions.

Students should observe that the *tempo* of the final movement of this Fourth Sonata is *exactly the same* as that of the first movement, viz.,  $\text{♩} = 100$ .

As regards the performance of this movement, Parts I and II might be played with grand effect upon the Full organ, with an appreciable decrease of tone-intensity for the *Fugato* of Part II, say Gt. to 15th (without 16 ft.) with Full Swell (closed) coupled, until bar 82 is reached, when a magnificent and telling *Crescendo* can be obtained by opening the Swell box, and by gradually building up the Great organ tone at the same time, either by Composition Pedals, thumb-pistons, or by the left hand—which can easily be spared for pulling out the stops, since the manual quaver chords can be played by the right hand alone.



## CHAPTER VI.

## FIFTH SONATA, IN D MAJOR.

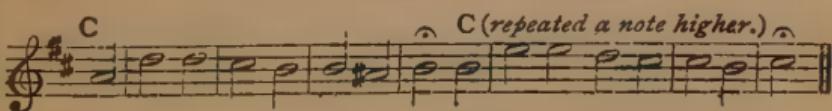
THE Fifth Sonata consists of three movements:—an *Andante* (D major), an *Andante con moto* (B minor), and a concluding *Allegro maestoso* (D major). The opening *Andante* is nothing more than a simple unadorned *Choral*, harmonized for the most part in First Species Counterpoint of a purely vocal character. In Mendelssohn's original MS., this *Choral* was repeated—with a harmonization in “Composers’” *Second Species*—as a *fourth* movement, after what is now the *Finale*.\* But the composer, who doubtless felt, on reflection, that its appearance there was somewhat redundant, drew a red pencil mark through the ink-written “No. 4” (each of the four movements being numbered in this way), and wrote with the same pencil “No. 3” against the repeated *Choral*, and “Fine” after the long *Allegro maestoso*. By this means, the Sonata then practically consisted of *two* movements only; the first being a Ternary design with a varied *Choral* for parts I and III, and having the present B minor movement for its Episode (Part II). It is easy to see why Mendelssohn again changed his mind. To have retained the repetition of the *Choral* would have endangered the *freshness of the D major tonality* for the *Finale*; while to have got over this difficulty by interposing an extra movement—say in G or A major—would

\* See Chapter VIII.

have made the Sonata *too long*. Besides, what could be the character of such an interposed movement? A slow movement would have been *de trop* after what had gone before; and a quick movement would have completely forestalled the *Finale* and ruined its effect. Mendelssohn was evidently not long in making up his mind that Sonata V contained no suitable place for a second appearance of the Choral, even though he appears to have replaced the *black* "No. 3" with a red "No. 4." The next thing he did was to entirely cross out the repetition of the Choral with the red pencil; thus leaving the order of movements exactly as we have it now. It may be remarked that his final decision, that of leaving an unadorned Choral (scarcely commented upon in any other part of the work) as the opening "movement" of a Sonata, seems at first sight an extraordinary procedure for a classical composer to adopt. But we must not forget that Mendelssohn began his Op. 65 as a Set of *Voluntaries*. In his Fifth Sonata, we see him adopting the general outline of the old English Voluntary form almost as closely perhaps as he adheres to it in the Second Sonata. The term "voluntary" was (as I have pointed out) more particularly applied to that unliturgical and unwarrantable organ performance, which, in the Services of the Church of England, at one time separated the reading of the psalms from the reading of the lessons: the *middle voluntary* in fact. This was *the voluntary* of the service; that one which by its central position was undisturbed by people coming in or going out of the church. Organ performances before and after the service were known as *introductory* and *concluding voluntaries*; qualified terms which have survived to the present day. We have already seen that Samuel Wesley's voluntaries were evidently in-

tended for this *middle* position in the service, since, appropriately enough, they invariably begin with a slow movement (*Adagio*, *Largo*, *Larghetto* or *Andante maestoso*), either for the great Diapasons, or for the Choir Stops, which is followed by an *Allegro* for the Full organ or Great to 15th. This is exactly what Mendelssohn gives us in his Fifth Sonata, and if a middle voluntary could be tolerated at the present day, we cannot imagine a more solemn or devotional beginning than this stately Choral in D major, which would follow the reading or singing of the Psalms for the day without the least feeling of incongruity.

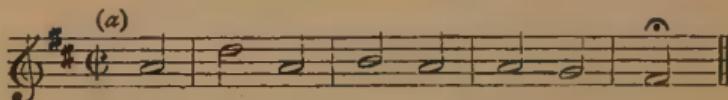
With respect to this Fifth Sonata, the first thing which occurs to the mind of the student or even that of the casual listener, is the question, did Mendelssohn adopt for his opening movement a Choral already composed by somebody else; or did he write an original tune in the spirit and style of the old Lutheran melodies which were so familiar and so attractive to him? Sir John Stainer once told me that he had never been able to trace any previous existence of this Choral *as a whole*. Its construction would involve the use of a long metre hymn with five lines of equal length to every verse, since it falls under the rhythmical formula which Dr. Riemann would describe as A + B + C + C + D (See Prout's *Musical Form*, Chapter VII); an irregular elongation of the normal design by the sequential repetition of the melody of the third strain a note higher in the scale:—



This element of sequential development is by no means an uncommon feature in some of the older German Chorals. It can be seen for example in

the Chorals given as Nos. 13, 16, 17, 23, 27, 34, in Prout's *Additional Exercises to Counterpoint*. And although a five-lined long metre hymn is not altogether unknown in German hymnology (there are three specimens of this kind of *Fünfzeiler* poetry in Dr. Fridrich Layriz' *Kern des Deutschen Kirchengesangs*), all search for the Choral in the Fifth Sonata has as yet proved a fruitless one.

If, on the other hand, we regard this Choral as an original production of Mendelssohn's, we must at any rate discount the first strain, Ex. (a):—



which is undoubtedly "borrowed" (intentionally or otherwise) from the opening of the old Choral, *Dir, dir, Jehova, will ich singen*, which (according to Sterndale Bennett and Otto Goldschmidt) first appeared in print in J. A. Freylinghausen's *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, published at Halle in 1704, Ex. (b):—

HALLE, 1704.

Dir, dir, Je - ho - va, will ich sing - en.

But this choral appears to be an enlargement of a still older tune which (according to Sir John Stainer's *Church Hymnary*, 1898) first appeared in the *Musikalisches Handbuch* at Hamburg in 1690—a tune familiar to English Church Musicians as "Winchester New" or "Crasselius." See *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, No. 50 and Ex. (c):—

From "Musikalisches Handbuch,"  
Hamburg, 1690.

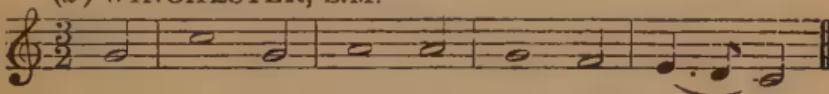
(c)

Wer nur den lie - ben Gott lässt wal - ter

Bartholomaüs Crasselius (1667-1724) by the way was the author of the words *Dir dir, Jehova*, which appeared first in print at Halle in 1697. In the first decades of the 18th century, the tune Winchester Old appeared in English collections of tunes in triple time, Ex. (d) :—

R. WEST, 1700, *The Clerk's Guide*, Shoreditch, 1820,  
and J. T. COOPER, 1850.

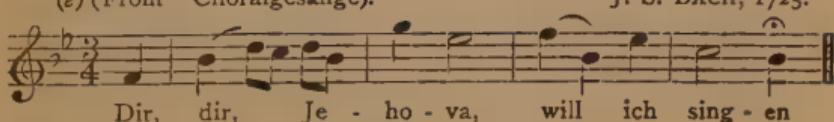
(d) WINCHESTER, L.M.



The late J. T. Cooper in his *Church Tune Book* (1850) ascribed the authorship of "Winchester New" to James Kent (born 1700). But my friend, Mr. T. Roylands Smith, informs me that an old book in his library (10th edition, printed in 1700 by A. Pearson for R. West at the Bible and Sun in Amen Corner) gives the melody in triple time much the same as J. T. Cooper printed it a century and a half later. It is also found in this form in Moore's Psalm-Singer's Delightful Pocket Companion, published in Glasgow, 1762. It is likewise in triple time that what may be considered as a very free variation of this melody—from the hand of J. S. Bach—appears in that master's *Choralgesänge* bearing the date 1725, Ex. (e) :—

(e) (From "Choralgesänge").

J. S. BACH, 1725.



Dr. W. H. Cummings has pointed out to me that the notes which form the first line of the melody called "Winchester New," exist with a trochaic accentuation as the first line of a tune called

“Weimar” in W. T. Best’s “80 Chorales”  
Ex. (f):—

(ROSENMÜLLER, 1650).  
(f) WEIMAR. From W. T. Best's "80 Chorales."

Mr. Best has attached to it the name of Johann Rosenmüller (Leipsic, 1650) as its composer. But there is another tune by Jakob Hintze (1622-1702) which begins with exactly the same phrase, viz., *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*, familiar to us in England as the tune always sung to the Easter Hymn “At the Lamb’s high feast we sing” (A. & M., No. 127, see Ex. (g)):—

(g) JAKOB HINTZE's Melody (Berlin, 1690).

Al - le Men - schen müs - sen ster - ben.

This appeared first in print at Berlin in *Praxis Pietatis Melica*, the 24th edition of which was issued in 1690. Probably, because of the resemblance of its first line to that of “Weimar,” Ex. (f), this tune of Hintze’s frequently bears the name of Rosenmüller as its composer. It might, with almost equal justice, bear the name of Mendelssohn. In 17th and 18th century French and Swiss Huguenot Metrical Psalters, this much used phrase appears with slightly modified intervals in a minor key, as the opening of an invariable setting of Psalm xcv, Ex. (h):—

PSEAUME XCV.  
(h)

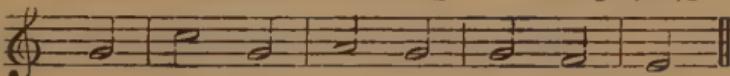
French Metrical Psalters  
(18th and 19th Centuries).

(Marot et Beze) Su - se - gay - ons nous au Seig - neur.

I find it so in Psalters published at La Haye, 1721 and 1722, Amsterdam 1729, Basle 1744, and

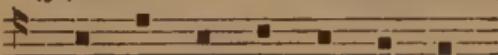
Lausanne 1810. It also appears, exactly as Mendelssohn wrote it, as the first line (repeated for the second) in a tune in Lindeman's *Koral Bog*, published at Bergen (Norway) in 1873, Ex. (i) :—

(i) From LINDEMAN'S "Koral Bog." Bergen, 1873.



Cropping up as it does in so many different places, one can only suppose that a phrase so frequently used must have its real origin in some old fragment of Ecclesiastical plainsong, such as Ex. (j) :—

(j) MODUS III. Ancient Plainsong (?)



which would seem to claim a Phrygian parentage, since its highest note is the Dominant, and its lowest note the final of the Third Mode.

Each of the first nine melodies given above proceeds differently after the first phrase or line is finished: so that Mendelssohn, if he plagiarized, sinned in good company. It would be interesting to point to several other "original" chorals by Mendelssohn; but I will only mention two, (i) the beautiful tune in E major, which forms the Coda of his magnificent Pianoforte Fugue in E minor (Op. 35, No. 1) which contains "reminiscences" of *Was mein Gott will* (used in the First Organ Sonata), and *Ein feste burg*—the last line of which is again identical with the last line of *Vom Himmel hoch da Komm 'ich her*, [even Martin Luther was liable to plagiarize or repeat himself], and (ii), the Choral in G major—scored for wood wind—which forms so delightful a feature in the  $\frac{6}{8}$  G minor instrumental movement of the *Lobgesang*, the first line of which bears a strong resemblance

to the opening of the Choral *Das walt Gott Vater und Gott Sohn*, ascribed by Dr. Layriz to J. S. Bach.

Mendelssohn has himself indicated the registering he intends for the performance of this Choral, viz., Great 16 and 8 ft. (with perhaps 4 ft.) and Pedal 16 and 8 ft.

The *Andante con moto* (B minor  $\frac{6}{8}$ ) seems to be a simple Binary Form:—

PART I, ending in Dominant Key at bar 16 (first beat).

PART II, ending in Tonic Key at bar 40 (first beat).

CODA, from second half of bar 40 to end.

In performance, "Clav. I" may be taken to mean Gt. with one and two of the softer 8 ft. stops, "Clav. II," Sw. 8 ft. with soft Reed. "I remember," says Mr. W. S. Rockstro, "the wonderfully delicate staccato of the pedal quavers in the second movement of the Fifth Sonata, which *the composer played upon a single 8 ft. stop*, with all the crispness of Dragonetti's most highly finished *pizzicato*." This performance took place in the Catherinen Kirche, Frankfort, in the spring of 1845, when Mendelssohn played the whole six sonatas straight through from his neatly written MS., to a select company of personal friends, of whom Mr. Rockstro was one. Mr. Edwards points out that at the return of the initial theme at bar 25, Mendelssohn originally gave the entire score *as now printed* to the L.H. (Clav. I), and furnished the R.H. (Clav. II) with a Second Species Counterpoint:—



The *Finale (Allegro maestoso)* in D affords another example of Mendelssohn's deliberate avoidance of the use of what is commonly known as "Sonata Form." In fact, no other Sonata of the six gave him so tempting an opportunity for its use, on

account of the brevity of the opening movements. He chose instead a constructive design which can only be briefly described as a kind of "Free Rondo form"—a *mixed* form, so to speak, in which some of the features of both "Rondo" and "Sonata" forms appear, but in such an irregular manner as to make it impossible to classify the entire movement under either of these two forms. This seems to be a straightforward analysis of the movement:—

PART I, ending with the full close in the Tonic key, bar 30 (first beat). This may be said to resemble the First Subject of a Rondo design.

PART II, beginning bar 31 and ending with a full close in the Dominant key in bar 63. This may be said to be episodical in character, since its matter and tonality are both contrasted with those of Part I. It also partakes *somewhat* of the character of a Second Subject, inasmuch as it reappears in Part IV, where it ends in the Tonic key; but the tonality of Parts II and IV cannot be said to be as sufficiently varied as the tonality of a "Sonata form" Second Subject ought to be.

PART III, from bar 63 to bar 79, is a *development* (rather than a repetition or recapitulation) of Part I, the First Subject. It has the same subject matter, but worked with frequent modulations to the related keys of the Tonic.

PART IV, from bar 80 to bar 112, is a development (rather than a repetition or recapitulation) of Part II, the Second Subject. It has the same subject matter, and to a great extent the same tonality as Part II, only it ends in the Tonic, instead of the Dominant key.

PART V, from bar 112 to the end, is very nearly identical in matter, character and tonality with Part I (28 bars instead of 30). Its last seven bars, however, return to the Choral *style* of the first movement, and in this respect the homogeneity of the Sonata is preserved, by the work ending as it began.

It will be seen from the foregoing analysis that the movement *resembles* Rondo form, inasmuch as Parts I, III, and V, have very much the same subject matter, although Part III is not in the Tonic Key; and that there is a slight similitude to Sonata Form, inasmuch as Parts II and IV present a kind of Second Subject, of which,

however, Part IV does not afford a regular recapitulation, and if it did, the Second Subject would be recapitulated *before the first*, which is again irregular.

A word or two may be said here concerning the poetical meaning of the Fifth Sonata. In the absence of Mendelssohn's own explanation of his inner promptings, all conjecture concerning them is by no means easy or reliable. Yet, when we regard the music æsthetically—the solemn choral, followed by the sorrowful sighing of the B minor *Andante*, which, merging into the mellowed joy tints of the *Finale*, ends with a reference to the opening choral—we see, perhaps, some of the impressions left on the composer's mind by the contemplation of a beautiful autumnal landscape at eventide; impressions which have been put into charming language by an old German poet, of which the following is a free translation:—

“The year lies dying in this evening light;  
The poet, musing in autumnal woods,  
Hears melancholy sighs  
Among the withered leaves.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not so! but like an angel glorified,  
The angel of the year departs; lays down  
His robes, once green in spring,  
Or bright with summer's blue;

And, having done his mission on the earth—  
Filling ten thousand vales with golden corn,  
Orchards with rosy fruit,  
And scattering flowers around—

He lingers, for a moment in the west,  
With the declining sun, sheds over all  
A pleasant farewell smile—  
And so, returns to God!”

As regards the performance of this movement, it may be pointed out that Dr. W. Volckmar's edition (published by Litolff) contains no less than 58 indications, “Clav. I” and “Clav. II.” In the

original MS. Mendelssohn (says Mr. Edwards) uses these directions no less than 38 times, but not in the same way as Dr. Volckmar.\* These directions were afterwards crossed through in pencil by the composer, who evidently remembered that he was writing for English organists and English organs of the first half of the 19th century, and that the balance of Great and Swell tone as well as the limited Swell *bass* compass of these instruments would render his registering ineffective if not absolutely impossible. With a modern organ these restrictive conditions no longer exist ; but at the same time it should not be forgotten that Mendelssohn *did alter his mind*, and that the movement should be played now upon one manual only, as indicated in the first and subsequent printed editions. But with this restriction, *stop changes* can be both conveniently and effectively indulged in, with no detriment whatever to the composer's final *one manual* decision. For instance, we might very well begin the movement with Great to 15th with Swell coupled. Both manuals might be reduced during the second half of bar 30, and Part II began and continued with these softer stops until the beginning of Part III in bar 63 ; when the Full organ might be used after a *crescendo* during the four previous bars. In the *a la cadenza* passage immediately preceding Part IV (bars 78 and 79) a *diminuendo* effect might be obtained by reducing both Gt. and Sw. stops to say 16, 8, and 4 ft. with the softer Swell reeds. The longer *cadenza* passage (bars 100 to 103) might be played *crescendo* up to Gt. 15th with Full Swell, with which bar 104 might begin. The Full Great might be resumed at bar 112, and the Solo reeds coupled to Great at the second half of bar 133.

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\* In no single case did Mendelssohn ever intend that the melody (first heard in bar 31) should be played upon a different manual to that upon which the accompanying triplets are performed.

## CHAPTER VII.

## SIXTH SONATA, IN D MINOR AND MAJOR.

THE concluding Sonata of the set has *three* movements, (i) *Choral with variations*, (ii) *Fuga*, (iii) *Andante* in the Tonic Major key. The Fugue may be considered by some musicians to be the last variation on the Choral, since there is a slight melodic resemblance between its subject and the opening phrase of the Choral. Such a view would of course reduce the number of movements to *two*; but it is impossible to entertain this notion for a single moment when we consider (i) that in all his four variations, Mendelssohn preserves the melody of the Choral practically intact, with only the slender embellishment of very few passing notes here and there, and (ii) that the Coda of the fourth variation is of so conclusive and finite a character that it leaves little room for doubt that the composer intended his first movement to end there, and that he regarded the fugue as the second movement of the sonata.

As this is the fourth time we have met with the use of a Choral during our analysis of the Six Organ Sonatas, it may be as well to tabulate these appearances of external thematic material, and to show the different treatment to which each is subjected by Mendelssohn. The Chorals occur only in the first movements.

## TABLE OF CHORALS USED IN THE ORGAN SONATAS.

*Sonata I.*—*Was mein Gott will, das gescheh allezeit*—used as the second subject of the movement.

*Sonata III.*—*Aus tiefer Noth schrei zu dir*—used as the Canto Fermo upon which an Episodical Fugue is built.

*Sonata V.*—An original Choral, the first strain of which strongly resembles *Dir, dir, Jehovah will ich singen*—used in an unadorned manner as an entire first movement on its own account.

*Sonata VI.*—*Vater unser im Himmelreich*—used as the *Tema* for four variations.

In the *Chorale Book for England* (1865), the Editors assign the authorship of the melody *Vater unser im Himmelreich*, to Luther—with a query. They also give as its first appearance in print the book *Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen*, printed by M. Lotther, at Magdeburg, in 1540. Dr. Fridrich Layriz in his *Kern des Deutschen Kirchengesangs* (1854), assigns it to “*Einzeldruck 1539, Babst, 1545.*”

The hymn *Vater unser* is the German metrical version of the Lord’s Prayer, published by Martin Luther in 1539. The Rev. Dr. Julian in his *Dictionary of Hymnology* (p. 1205) says:—“It is a beautiful rendering, and has been by some regarded as Luther’s finest hymn. Each of the first eight stanzas amplifies one of the clauses of the Lord’s Prayer (omitting the Doxology), and the ninth is on the Amen.”

Very nearly the same system of amplified versification is to be seen in “*The Whole Booke of Psalms with the Prose on the margin; collected into English Meeter by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins and others; conferred with the Hebrew with apt Notes to sing them withall*” (London, 1613), with the single difference that the first four lines of the ninth stanza contain the Doxology, and the last two are devoted to the Amen.

The appearance of the Lutheran Choral *Vater unser* at this early date in an English Metrical Psalter presents so many features of interest to the student of musical notation, that I make no apology for transcribing it (page 461):—

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

D.C.

Ovr Fa - ther which in heauen art, And mak'st vs all  
 one bro - ther-hood. To call vp - on thee with one heart,  
 Our heauen-ly Fa - ther and our God. Grant we pray not  
 with lips a - lone, But with our hearts' deep sigh and grone.

Here we see the melody in its native Dorian simplicity, written entirely in the Ecclesiastical First Mode with the optional B *mol* used at (a). By the laws of *musica ficta* (see *Composers' Counterpoint*, p. 14) when the melody was sung from this notation a sharp was used to raise the note which lay a second below the final in a Cadence; consequently the note at (b) would be sung a semitone higher as C  $\sharp$ , and the note at (c) as G  $\sharp$ . The letters D.C. are the initials of the versifier.

The introduction of the accidental  $\natural$  at (a) is also in accordance with modal traditions, which provided that a note lying a second above two others of the same pitch should be lowered a semitone in performance. It will also be observed that the introduction of the accidental flat obviates the tritone which would otherwise occur between the highest and lowest notes of the passage (B  $\natural$  and F).

On p. 499 of this Psalter occurs another metrical version of the Lord's Prayer in one single stanza, the words and tune of which both agree with those given in Richard Daye's Psalter, 1591.

It may be interesting to compare with the Sternhold and Hopkins' English metrical version of the Lord's Prayer another of the same kind which appears on page 369 of Christoffel Beudeker's Metrical Psalter with tunes, published by Abraham Strander in Amsterdam (1750), where the Choral *Vater unser* is printed in this form, set to the Dutch metrical version of the Lord's Prayer. The stanza-versification agrees with the arrangement carried out by Sternhold and Hopkins, rather than with that of Luther.

GOD! Gy die on - ze Va - der züt | Die u - wen stoel  
 van Ma - jes - teit | Hoog in den He - mel hebt ges - ticht |  
 Wy Ko - men voos uw Aan - ge - zicht | En naa-d'ren uw  
 Ge - naa- den-tzoon | Geg - zond op't Of - fer van uw Zoon.

Here the melody appears again in the notation of the Dorian mode, with however the use of the necessary accidentals. It will be observed that at \* occurs the only variation from the version given by Mendelssohn in his Sixth Sonata, viz., the substitution of the note A for B.

The tune appears in the second edition of John Playford's *Whole Book of Psalms, with all the Ancient and Modern Tunes sung in Churches, composed in three parts, Cantus, Medius, and Bassus*

(1677). Here it is set to Psalm cxii and to an English metrical version of the Lord's Prayer, which differs from either version given in Sternhold and Hopkins. This consists of a versification of two stanzas:—

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

A. 3 Voc. 112 Ps. tune.

CANTUS. (h) 1. Our Fa-ther, which in hea - ven art, Thy Name be  
2. For - give our tres-pass-es, as we For-give them

MEDIUM. (f) (f)

BASSUS.

hal-low'd by each heart: Thy king-dom come, Thy will be done  
where we tres-pass'd be: To no temp - ta - tion lead our will, (a)

in earth as 'tis in heav'n Thy throne. Give us this (b) (d)  
But us de - li - ver from all ill: For Thine the (c)

day our dai - ly bread, that souls and bo-dies may be fed. (e)  
King-dom and the pow'r, and glo - ry is for ev - er - more

Here, in a book nearly a century older than Beudeker's Amsterdam Psalter, we see the tune in the modern notation of D minor.

Playford printed the tunes in his Psalter, first with the Cantus and Bassus together on two staves, and then with the Medius by itself (on a treble staff to be sung an octave lower in pitch), and lastly the Bassus by itself. The above three-part harmonization of *Vater unser* is interesting, as showing how music was written before the invention of the *natural accidental* (♯). At (a) and (e) a note previously raised in pitch by an accidental sharp, has to be restored to its normal pitch by the use of a flat; at (b) (e) and (d) a note previously lowered by the flat in the key signature, has to be accidentally sharpened by means of a sharp. At (f) (f) observe the consecutive 5ths between Cantus and Medius, at (g) (g) note the consecutive 8ves between Cantus and Bassus. Mr. H. E. Woolridge remarks of Playford's counterpoint, that "he is only a tolerable musician, though he thought himself a very good one." At the same time, although his part-writing was a great deal too free, we must give honest John Playford full credit for his anticipative feeling for *modern harmony* as shown in his use of the third inversion of the Chord of the Dominant 13th at (h) and (i), [Mendelssohn himself uses this chord at i], and especially when we remember that in 1677, neither Bach nor Handel were born, and Henry Purcell was only a youth of 19. Yet Playford used the modern notation of the minor key, whilst Handel as frequently as not used the *modal* notation thereof, *i.e.*, with the omission of the last flat from the key signature—that which affects the sub-mediant of the scale (see *Composers' Counterpoint*, chap. II, § 31).

Mendelssohn harmonizes the Choral as if for five voices. This *vocal* arrangement is especially observable in bar 22 (in which the second tenor crosses above the first) and in the several places where a note doubled in the unison by two voices is written in both manual staves as though the composer intended it to be played by two *hands* (see bars 5, 7, 8, 14, 23). In bar 17 the two crotchets seem to belong to the *second* tenor part, as otherwise there would be consecutive octaves between the *first* tenor and the bass part. The disposition of the vocal score seems to be thus intended:—

Bars 17 and 18.

S.  
A.  
1st T.  
2nd T.  
B.

The second minim in the middle staff of bar 14 seems to need *tying* to the first crotchet of bar 15.

The formal plan of the Choral and variations may be thus analyzed:—

*Choral*  $\frac{2}{2}$  (26 bars) ending on the first crotchet of bar 26 after an interrupted cadence over a short tonic pedal in bars 24-5.

*Variation I*,  $\frac{4}{4}$  (28½ bars, from bar 26 to the second beat of bar 54). This consists of a Prelude of 5½ bars followed by the unaltered theme in the R.H. staff (19½ bars in length, ending on the first quarter of bar 50), followed by a Coda of 4½ bars, ending on the first half of bar 54. A continuous semiquaver counterpoint of the Third Species is maintained throughout the whole of this variation. A rhythmical figure for the pedals deserves notice:—

This Variation I is the only place in the whole of the Sonatas where Mendelssohn writes specially for an 8 ft. Pedal stop, and he draws attention to this particularized registration in his *Prefatory Remarks*.

*Variation II*,  $\frac{12}{8}$  (16½ bars, from the second half of bar 54 to the first half of 71, which is in reality a half-bar—the only half-bar in the whole of the Six Sonatas). Here, a counterpoint of the Second Species (three notes to one of the C.F.) is started by the pedals (16 and 8 ft.) on the third beat of bar 54. The theme itself is commenced (and continued for the most part) in First Species chords on the last quarter of bar 54, and its melody remains unaltered throughout the entire variation. It ends on the third beat of bar 69, and the pedal counterpoint continues after that to the first half of the short bar 71, where it dies out on the lower tonic. In Mendelssohn's

autograph copy, Variations 2 and 3 are connected in one *whole bar* thus:—

The manual parts exhibit some interesting and varied specimens of "Composers'" Fourth Species Counterpoint in bars 56, 58, 63, 65, and 66, and of the Second Species in bars 60, 66, 67.

*Variation III, 4* (20½ bars, beginning at the second portion of the half-bar 71, and ending on the first beat of bar 92). The theme is begun at once by the left hand in bar 71, and ends on the first quarter of bar 89. The remainder of this bar, together with bars 90, 91, and the first quarter of bar 92, constitute the Coda. The only melodic alteration of the theme is seen in bars 75, 77, 78, 84, and 87, where a few passing notes of the simplest description are sparingly introduced. The two-part Counterpoint assigned to the right hand may be conveniently described as "Composers' Fifth Species," consisting very largely of all kinds of modifications of this figure:—



The pedals for the most part play a staccato bass of a *quasi pizzicato* character.

*Variation IV* contains two presentations of the theme (unaltered save for passing notes in bars 109, 110, 132), one of which is entirely assigned to the pedal organ, the other being divided between the two hands in a responsive or antiphonal manner, with the use of the pedal organ confined to the Cadences. The variation consists of 99 bars (92-190 inclusive) and is constructed in the following manner:—*Prelude* of 2½ bars (92 to first half of 94); *Theme* 41 bars (second half of 94 to first half of 135); *Coda* 4 bars (second half of 135 to first half of 139); *Second presentation of Theme* (incomplete) 26 bars (second half of 139 to first half of 165); *Coda* 25½ bars (second half of 165 to end). The contrapuntal environment of the theme consists of a brilliant arpeggio series of First Species chords, there being two harmonies in each bar.

During the first presentation of the theme by the pedals, the arpeggios are by no means continuous, considerable relief being afforded by the 3rd, 5th, and 6th strains of the Choral being accompanied by First Species *chords* struck on the unaccented quarters of the bar (as in bars 111, 112, &c.).

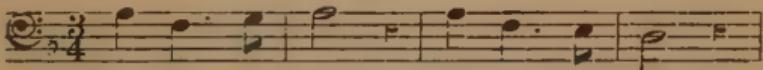
It will be seen from the foregoing analysis that these variations are in themselves a complete compendium of Composers' Counterpoint, the First Species being exemplified in many of its widely different aspects, and each of the remaining four Species being represented as well. From this point of view the Sixth Sonata affords an invaluable field for studious observation to the lover of the Art of Counterpoint in its free modern style. The discerning student will also not fail to notice that in each of the variations the *pause* at the end of every strain of the Choral is amplified by several different harmonies being given to the final melody note of the strain. For examples, see bars 36-7, 56-7, 73-4, and 98-9, &c., &c.

In rendering this Choral and Variations it should be noticed that the tempo of the first three variations is *considerably slower* than that of the Choral ( $\text{♩} = 63$  in each case, instead of  $\text{♩} = 100$ ). The tempo of the fourth variation (the *Allegro molto*) is much quicker than that of the Choral ( $\text{♩} = 69$ , i.e.,  $\text{♩} = 138$  instead of  $\text{♩} = 100$ ). As regards registration: the Composer's *mezzo piano* at the opening of the Choral would appear to suggest the Gt. Diaps.: his "Clavier II 8 feet" in bar 26 might be represented by the Swell Diaps., and his "Clav. I *mezzo piano* 8 feet and 4 feet" by Gt. Clarabella and 4 ft. Flute. The manual portions of the second variation might be assigned to the Gt. to Principal (with or without 16 ft.). In the third variation, "Clav. I 8 ft." may be taken to mean a soft Swell Reed, and "Clav. II 8 ft." as Choir Lieblich Gedact. From bar 92 to 181, the manual portions may very well be played

on the Great Full to Mixtures without Reeds. Pedal solo reeds (16 and 8 ft.) may be effectively used as far back as bar 140, when they should be put in, and bars 182 to the end should be given on the full organ (all the stops). In my own Edition of the Sonatas (Hammond & Co.), without in any way disturbing Mendelssohn's original notation, I have marked bars 92 to 98 (inclusive) to be played in this manner with the semiquaver groups divided between the two hands:—



As stated before, the first four bars of the fugue are obviously derived from the first phrase of the Choral:—



The entire movement is distinctly vocal in character, and its form is clearness itself.

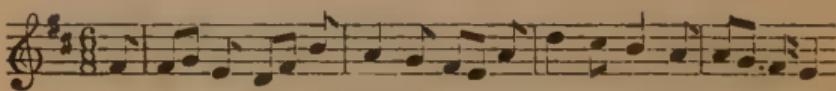
The Exposition ends in bar 29. In bar 31 the "middle entries" begin with a statement of the subject in the relative major key. The only episode is to be found in bars 47 to 53. Originally this consisted of nine bars instead of seven as now. The composer altered the chord marked \*, and expunged the following two bars, which are to be found in his autograph copy between bars 49 and 50 thus:—

At bar 56, the final section of the Fugue begins with the subject assigned to the pedals. After the Dominant pedal in

bars 63 to 69, we have a few obvious stretto points of imitation, with the theme combined against itself *per moto contrario*, and the Fugue ends with the eight bar subject given in its entirety in the top part.

The following are a few suggestions for the effective rendering of this Fugue. Begin with Gt. 8 and 4 ft. with Swell 8 and 4 coupled (no 16 ft.). At the second crotchet of bar 50 go on to the Choir with both hands. At the second crotchet of bar 52 go on to the Swell with both hands. Return to the Great with the *left* hand only at the beginning of bar 54, keeping the *right* hand engaged on the Swell manual until the third crotchet in bar 56, when it can very well join the left hand on the Great manual. At bar 63 add full Swell, and obtain a crescendo by opening the Swell box during the dominant pedal. At bar 70 fix the Swell pedal down, and in the next bar (71) add 2 ft. At bar 74 add Mixtures, and at bar 78 use the Full organ.

The last movement (the calm, vocal character of which seems strangely out of keeping with the term *Finale* which the composer writes above it) was originally written in crotchets, and in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. It has sometimes been set to words and sung. Mr. Edwards points out that no less than six movements from these Sonatas were adapted to sacred words by Mr. Edwin Flood, and the appropriateness of the words to the movement before us, "Oh ! that my head were *waters*," adapted by Mr. *Flood*, will not escape attention. A far more appropriate setting of this lovely *Andante*, indefensible though it well may be, is the Eucharistic Hymn :—



O Sa - lu - ta - ris Hos - ti - a Quæ cæ - li pan-dis os - ti-um:

The melodic resemblance of its opening phrase to the composer's "O rest in the Lord" and also to the

well-known Eucharistic hymn tune "Rockingham" although a slight one yet deserves notice. The form of this concluding movement is a Simple Binary design, and may be thus analyzed:—

PART I, ending on the fourth quaver of bar 16, in the minor key of the leading note.

PART II, beginning in the Dominant key on the last quaver in bar 16, and ending on the fifth quaver of bar 30.

CODA, from the last quaver of bar 30 to the end.

The first four bars may be played R.H. Swell 8 ft. (with soft reed), L.H. Choir (string-toned 8 ft.). At the last quaver of bar 4 play on the Swell with both hands. Let the *left hand* return to the Choir on the last quaver of bar 8, and rejoin the right hand on the Swell on the last quaver of bar 12. At the third quaver of bar 17 take the left hand back to the Choir, and on the last quaver of bar 26 take it on to the Swell again. On the last quaver of bar 29 the left hand might once more go on to the Choir, and finally return to the Swell on the second quaver of bar 35.

It may not be too fanciful, it is certainly not irreverent, if an attempt be made to connect the æsthetic meaning of this very fine Sonata with the clauses of the Lord's Prayer. Luther, as we have seen, versified the Paternoster in nine *poetical* stanzas. Mendelssohn may be said to have illustrated the same ideas in what may be almost termed seven *musical* stanzas as follows:—

I. The *Choral* (*Vater unser*), which is inseparably connected with the text of the entire work, the Divinely given words:—

"*Our Father, Which art in heaven.*"

II. *Var. I.* The hush which succeeds the majestic enunciation of the parent theme, the solitary upward flight of the opening semiquaver groups, "like wreaths of incense cloud," the appearance and continuity of the unchanged Canto Fermo, the final fluttering down of the ever-soaring contrapuntal

pinions, all alike seem to breathe the holy calm of the words :—

“*Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*”

III. *Var. 2.* Here, the ever-pervading “Our Father” theme—accompanied as it is by the heavy bass counterpoint, so suggestive of exertion and energy, and full as the harmony is with the hindrances of suspension, syncopation, &c.—would appear to be a not inapt musical illustration of the words :—

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

IV. *Var. 3.* Here, the plaintive upper voices, which assume such a beseeching tone as they utter their supplication for mercy, whilst the Paternoster theme pursues its way beneath them, seem to pray :—

“*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*”

V. *Var. 4.* Here, the firm, steadfast character of the Canto Fermo, unaltered, unchanged, unchecked by the ever restless activity of the arpeggio figures which encircle it, would seem to suggest to a listener's mind the certainty of “Our Father” granting the request contained in the petitions :—

“*And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.*”

VI. *Fuga.* Here, the idea of the Doxology appears to assert itself :—

“*For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.*”

We recognise this in the ever recurring Fugue subject derived from the “Our Father” theme. Out of 85 bars there is scarcely one which does not contain this theme in some form or other.

VII. *Finale.* As applied to so calm and reposeful a movement as the concluding *Andante*, this term seems only to be justified as the musical equivalent of *Amen*, “so be it,” an idea which is beautifully expressed by the bright *trustfulness* of the Tonic Major key.

All this of course is only pure surmise. Mendelssohn may or may not have intended his Sixth Sonata to be a tone picture of the Paternoster. We may if we like accept a much simpler solution of his meaning. The venerable thread of melody which passes through the entire composition, influencing

rather than influenced by the never ceasing contrapuntal activity which always surrounds it, and merging at last into the angelic brightness of such a heavenly vision as alone could have inspired so ethereal a production as the final *Andante*; all this may have been the result of a mere mental impression on the ever receptive mind and soul of the composer, who in passing through some old-world village in sunny Rhineland, during his much appreciated holiday season, might have beheld and heard:—

There in the tranquil evenings of summer, when brightly the sunset

Lighted the village street, and gilded the vanes on the chimneys, Matrons and maidens sat in snow-white caps and in kirtles, Scarlet and blue and green, with distaffs spinning the golden Flax for the gossiping looms, whose noisy shuttles within doors Mingled their sound with the whir of the wheels and the songs of the maidens.

Solemnly down the street came the parish priest, and the children Paused in their play to kiss the hand he extended to bless them. Reverend walked he among them; and uprose maidens and matrons,

Hailing his slow approach with words of affectionate welcome. Then came the labourers home from the field, and serenely the sun sank

Down to his rest, and twilight prevailed. Anon from the belfry Softly the Angelus sounded, and over the roofs of the village Columns of pale blue smoke, like clouds of incense ascending, Rose from a hundred hearths, the homes of peace and contentment.

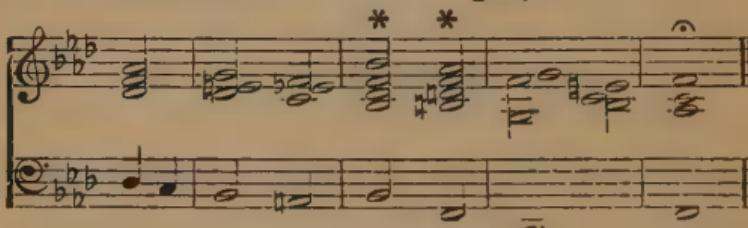


## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCLUSION.

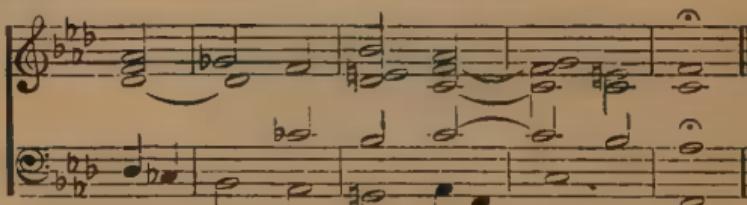
ATTENTION has been frequently drawn to the careful revision which Mendelssohn gave to his Organ Sonatas. His autograph copy exhibits signs of this patient emendation upon every page—one might almost say upon every stave.

Some of his “first thoughts,” however, are so beautiful in themselves, that no one but an artist of the very first rank would have deemed them capable of improvement. This is especially true of the concluding bars of the first movement of Sonata I, which stand thus in the autograph :—



Originally both the D's in the chords marked \*\* were *natural*. Mendelssohn crossed out in black-lead the ♭ to the D in the first chord, and with the same pencil inserted another ♭ in the second chord.

In the printed copies, the same passage stands thus :—



The loss of the bold diatonic effect of the bass *passing* note C♯ in the autograph is more than compensated by the still bolder modulation to the key of the minor 2nd, which the

C  $\flat$  induces as the bass note of a Dominant  $\frac{6}{4}$  chord in the key of G  $\flat$ ; but on the other hand this modulation involves an alteration in the Canto Fermo *Was mein Gott will*. Mendelssohn evinces a respect for contrapuntal propriety in his correction of the hidden octaves he had originally perpetrated between the extreme parts of chords 3 and 4 of the first example—a respect which less-gifted composers would do well to emulate.

I have already shown in Chapter VI how unwillingly Mendelssohn relinquished the idea of giving a second harmonization of the Choral in D major, which opens the Fifth Sonata. He seems to have had some difficulty in choosing which of the two versions should be adopted to the entire exclusion of the other. At one time he had some intention of making \* *this* his first movement; for in the margin of his autograph he has pencilled "No. 1" against it:—

\* Printed here by kind permission of Arthur O'Leary, Esq., the owner of the autograph.



It will be seen at a glance that the chief formal difference between this rejected harmonization and the one retained, is the altered position of the modulations to the Dominant key and its relative minor. These tonal "transitions" practically change places. Although the modulation to A major at the end of the fourth strain as shown above is exceedingly beautiful, it must be candidly admitted that the full close in F $\sharp$  minor at the end of the second strain is by no means as happy an inspiration. The harmonization ultimately chosen (that which we have in the printed copies) is by far the stronger of the two; giving as it does the Dominant modulation first, and having the octave of the "final" (instead of its third) in the top part of each cadence. Still, the rejected harmonization given above will be found to contain many points of interest to the student.

My old friend and fellow-student, Dr. H. A. Harding, has pointed out to me—in confirmation of my notion that the Sixth Sonata is the continuous expression and development of a single main idea—that the four *concluding* notes of the fugue are identical with the four *initial* notes of the *Finale*—with the mode changed from minor to major. This is an interesting point which ought not to be overlooked.

It has already been stated that at one time Mendelssohn intended his Six Sonatas, Op. 65, to be "a kind of Organ School"; and that he even went so far as to allow a preliminary advertisement of the publication to appear with the title, "Mendelssohn's School of Organ Playing"—a title which he withdrew before the work was actually issued. Several reasons might be adduced in explanation of this withdrawal: probably that which carried the greatest weight with the composer was the fear that

the term "School" might be misunderstood. The advertisement just referred to, which appeared in the *Musical World* of July 24th, 1845, contained the following statement:—

"The masterly performances of the above highly-gifted Musical Genius on the noble Organ in the Town Hall at Birmingham, as well as on other large Organs in the Metropolis, were such as to excite the admiration and delight of all the competent judges who were so fortunate as to hear him: and to induce a wish on the part of the Musical Public in general, and of English Organists in particular, that he would publish some of his own Compositions for that 'King of Instruments' in order that they might enjoy the advantage of possessing such excellent models for their study and practice, and thus have an opportunity of availing themselves of such valuable assistants towards the acquisition of the knowledge and emulative cultivation on their part, of so sterling and refined a school of Organ-playing. With a special view, therefore, to the gratification of the numerous admirers of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Messrs. Coventry & Hollier have prevailed upon him to write the 'Six Grand Sonatas' expressly for publication in England at their establishment, and which they intend to bring forward immediately, as specimens of what the Composer himself considers his own peculiar style of performance on the Organ."

It will thus be readily seen that by the term "School" Mendelssohn only intended his Op. 65 to be an exponent of his *style* of playing, and in no sense whatever did he design it as an academical course for the acquirement of technical skill, in the way in which such a book as Rinck's *Organ School* may be said to have been put forth. It is by no means improbable that Mendelssohn may have dropped the use of the word "School" in view of the obvious want of *gradation in difficulty* which he could plainly see the Sonatas were bound to present to the critical observation of every organ teacher who would in the face of such a title regard them *a priori* as an educational medium for the use of his pupils.

It may not be incorrect perhaps to decide that

No. 2 is the easiest of the set, and that No. 5 is from several points of view, the most exacting in the demands it makes upon the *technique* of the player; but between these two extremes (if they are such) the "order of difficulty" is by no means *certain*. What may be good for one pupil, may not be quite as beneficial for another. It is therefore with a great deal of hesitancy that any definite suggestion can be made as to the best order in which the Sonatas ought to be studied by the average organ student. But taking as many technical points as possible into consideration, a good working order, from the academical point of view, might be thus, Nos. 2, 4, 6, 1, 3, 5.

An attempt has also been made to explain, in preceding chapters, some of the causes which may have led to that complete success which has attended this noble set of Sonatas from their inception until now. They still remain—and are likely to remain—an indispensable portion of that somewhat limited repertoire of really good classical organ music, which even the most advanced twentieth century organ solo-player can boast of. It has been suggested that Mendelssohn's complete avoidance of "Sonata form" was possibly due to his desire on the one hand not to make his movements too long, and on the other hand not to render them unsuitable to the genius of the organ—not only of his own but of *all* time. These two considerations are at least worthy of the serious attention of any musician who may be desirous of becoming a successful writer of organ sonatas. With respect to the desirability of not making the movements *too long*, it may be observed that all tone-production which is removed from the personal effort or touch of the artist, by a series of more or less complicated mechanical devices, must of necessity be less human, less emotional, less

psychical than are other musical sounds which emanate directly from the person of the artist himself (as in the case of a singer) or which come from a sound-producing apparatus situated close under his very fingers (as in the case of a violinist or a player of any other orchestral instrument, or even of a pianist). The organ being necessarily a *mechanical* tone-producer, cannot be listened to at a stretch for anything like a considerable time without engendering a feeling of aural-weariness. And although its tones can be varied, both in quality and intensity, to a large extent, yet the tone changes themselves are always lacking in *gradation*, being more or less lumpy, sudden and unnatural. All violent changes of intensity in the stiff, rigid and inelastic organ-tones are bound to convey to the ear notions of energetic control over vast quantities of inert matter, which would be impossible except by the aid of powerful machinery. As a recent critic somewhat forcibly but correctly pointed out, the very crescendo and diminuendo of the organ is a "faked" contrivance—not a *real* increase or decrease of tone production at all—but only a choking and an unchoking of the sound by means of the closing and opening of the Swell shutters, exactly as a bad boy might *cres.* or *dim.* the buzz of a "blue-bottle" by imprisoning or releasing the insect in or from an empty lucifer match box. It must be evident therefore that to write for the organ as though it were either a (mechanical) orchestra or a mere glorified or overgrown pianoforte is only to court artistic failure. It is this very failure which Mendelssohn avoided, and in the avoidance scored a big success.

The organ is one of the very last instruments which will satisfactorily bear the application of sensationalism in any shape or form. A sensational organ piece may *startle* its hearers, it may

even *amuse* them ; but it will never hold its own as an enduring classical work.

Again, we must not forget that the organ is essentially a product of *Christian worship* ; having its birth and early development in the great monastic houses of mediæval times. To this day, the very sound of an organ, wherever it may be heard, recalls to every listener's mind "the long drawn aisle and fretted vault" of the church or cathedral, and hence the king of instruments when transplanted to the secular concert hall is never *really at home there*. It still speaks, or tries to speak, in the language of the Church. That language is in reality the varied *accompaniment of the human voice*. How thoroughly Mendelssohn understood the vocal character of organ tone ; how exquisitely he brought out this vocal character in his Sonatas ! With the exception of the "rolling mighty strength" of the Finale to Sonata I (and perhaps a few bars of the first movement), the first and last movements of No. 4, the Finale of No. 5, and the fourth variation of No. 6, in all of which he struck out quite a new path for himself (aided perhaps by his knowledge of Bach's works), his Op. 65 is *absolutely vocal*. Did he not say in his letter to Fanny Hensel, when he was engaged upon the composition of No. 3, that he was rewriting the middle portion of the first movement "with another *choral* fugue ? For although these words may be taken to mean "a fugue on a choral" yet the composition referred to was based upon a theme inseparably connected with the vocal rendering of words, and whatever may be unvocal in this movement is at least *accompanimental*.

And yet another of the causes of Mendelssohn's success was his avoidance of *unnecessary* technical difficulty. We have seen how he erased the R.H. counterpoint from the recurrence of the theme in

the B minor movement of No. 5, how in the Finale of the same Sonata he sacrificed the 38 manual changes which at first he seemed to like, and so on. Many of the erasures in the autograph copy were made in order to facilitate the performance of the music. And (as Dr. Higgs once pointed out to me) he may even have considered and provided for the very limited pedalling powers of English organists of his day, by writing his Sonatas in such a way as by a little extra manual dexterity they could be performed without using the pedal organ at all!

It has also been stated that the composer issued to the subscribers to the first edition of his work, a sort of prospectus or circular, giving a kind of explanatory programme for each Sonata. This circular—evidently because of its detached or “inset” character—has unhappily become so rare, as to be practically extinct; but in the absence of Mendelssohn's own explanation of his ideas I have tried to show that it is by no means difficult for any

appreciative player or listener to form his own conception of the composer's meaning, or at any rate to attach a poetical signification of a definite and intelligible kind, which when considered in connection with the music may be said in some degree to express very much the same ideas in ordinary verbal language. This definiteness of purpose and aim may not be altogether an unimportant factor in the success which has attended these Sonatas for the last half century or more.

It may not be altogether invidious and is certainly not without reason, if Mendelssohn's Op. 65 be briefly compared with larger and more modern compositions for the organ. Some years ago, Dr. A. L. Peace, the accomplished organist of S. George's Hall, Liverpool (then of Glasgow), delivered himself of the following opinion in the pages of the *Scottish Monthly* :—

"The organ is the most comprehensive of all instruments, one of immense potentialities, one whose resources are even yet imperfectly known. In voicing and mechanism it far exceeds what would have been thought possible a century ago. What is organ music? Surely music that can be *made effective* on the organ. Barring Bach, Handel, and Mendelssohn there is no other music specially written which can compare with music *not* written for the organ. The modern school of composers have no sustaining power. They can write prettily for a good many bars, and strenuously for a few, but they have no stamina; in their larger pieces they start well, but soon fall off, and become either unintelligible, or utterly common-place. Music for the organ must have a well-defined outline, and a strongly marked rhythmic character."

Finally, it may be once more pointed out that Mendelssohn was asked to write these pieces because he had impressed the English people with his marvellous improvisations on the organ. Is it altogether an idle enquiry to ask, *What has become of the noble art of improvisation in these latter days?* At one time English organists were renowned for their extemporaneous performances on the organ.

"Fifty years ago," says the writer of an old magazine article dated May, 1827, "the sublime organ was approached with awe, and listened to with rapture by the pious, the scientific, and the sensitive. The combination of sublime genius, profound science, admirable execution, and electric originality are phenomena that obliterate all meaner things instantaneously—that paralyze envy, silence levity, and excite a tumult of extended applause which resounds in the ears of a second and third generation."

We are living in the same country which produced such extemporaneous players as John Worgan, Samuel Wesley, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, Thomas Adams, Henry Smart, Edward John Hopkins, and John Stainer. But when we look around we behold with dismay and disappointment how very small and slender is the list of present day organists who can in any way be regarded as the legitimate successors of the great names just mentioned. We may indeed

belong to the second, or even the third generation, in whose ears "the tumult of extended applause" raised by the delightful extemporaneous performances of departed organists may still be said to "resound." But what of the second and third generations after *us*? Will *they* be able to retain in their memories lingering recollections of beautiful extemporaneous playing heard in our own day? Can nothing be done to foster the preservation and future cultivation of this beautiful art?

Perhaps the following practical hints on extemporization from one who was himself a master of the art, **Johann Nepomuk Hummel** (1778-1837), may be found helpful:—

"To extemporize freely, the player must possess, as natural gifts, invention, intellectual acuteness, fiery elevation, and flow of ideas; the power of improving, arranging, developing, and combining the matter invented by himself, as well as that taken from others for this purpose.

As the result of scientific education he will have acquired such perfect readiness and certainty regarding the laws of harmony, and the most diversified applications of them, that, without even thinking particularly about them, *he no longer transgresses the rules*; and so great a readiness and certainty in playing, that without effort, and in any key, the hands may execute whatever the mind suggests, and execute it, indeed, almost without any consciousness of the mechanical operations which they perform. What the moment presents to the artiste must be played on the instrument correctly, with certainty, and in a suitable manner, and this must not be felt as a difficulty by the artiste, nor absorb the attention of his mind in a greater degree, than it claims the attention of a man who has received a scientific education to write with correctness, precision, and propriety, otherwise he will incur the danger, either of stopping short and losing himself altogether, or of being driven to common-place ideas, and to passages committed to memory.

To elucidate all this, I do not believe that I can do better than point out the way by which I acquired the power of playing extemporaneously. After I had so far made myself master of playing on the instrument; of harmony with all its applications; of the art of modulating correctly and agreeably; of enharmonic transition; of counterpoint, etc., that I was

able to reduce them to practice ; and that, by a diligent study of the best ancient and modern compositions, I had already acquired taste, invention of melody, ideas, together with the art of arranging, connecting, and combining them. As I was employed throughout the day with giving lessons, and composing in the evening, during the hours of twilight I occupied myself with extemporising on the pianoforte, sometimes in the free, and at other times in the strict or fugue style, giving myself up entirely to my own feelings and invention.

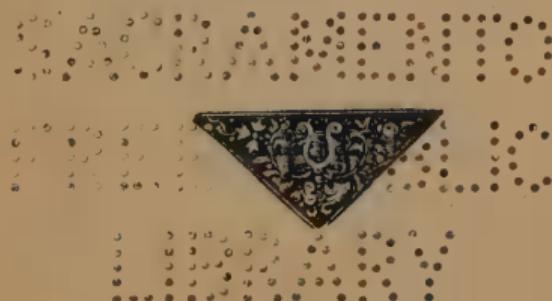
I arrived particularly at a good connexion and succession of ideas ; and strictness of rhythm ; at variety of character ; at changes of colouring ; at the avoiding of great diffusiveness (which easily degenerates into monotony) ; I endeavoured to ground my fantasia on the flow of my own ideas, as also occasionally to weave among them some known theme or subject, less with a view to vary it than to elaborate and exhibit it quite freely on the spur of the moment, under various shapes, forms, and applications, either in the strict or free styles.

When by degrees the taste and judgment were correctly formed, and when, after a couple of years quiet study in my own room, I had acquired a dexterity and confidence in this matter, and certainty and ease in executing mechanically with the fingers, what the mind on the instant had suggested, I ventured to extemporize before a few persons only—sound connoisseurs, others unacquainted with the science—and while so doing, observed quietly how they received it and what effect my fantasia produced on both portions of my little assembled and mixed public.

Lastly, when I had succeeded in attaining such firmness and certainty in all this as to be able to satisfy both parties equally, I ventured to offer myself before the public ; and from that moment, I confess, I have always felt less embarrassment in extemporising before an audience of two or three thousand persons, than in executing any written composition to which I was slavishly tied down.—**Time, Patience and Industry** lead to the desired end."

The results of such extemporaneous playing are by no means as transient and as fleeting as they may appear at first sight to be. They linger in the memory of those who hear them ; they kindle with never-dying flame the torch of art-longings and art-instincts, which might otherwise never let their light so shine before men. It may have been that

the memorable *Nunc Dimitis* of our English veteran, Samuel Wesley, as he touched the organ for the very last time (on Sept. 11th, 1837) with fingers at first tremulous with age, but moving with more and more renewed youth and vigour, as they were compelled to obey the commands and desires of the master soul, made an impression upon Mendelssohn which he never forgot. Nor were the extemporaneous performances of the composer of *Elijah* mere writing in sand. The great tide of human thought and inspiration is still advancing, and must advance higher and higher, carrying away and obliterating everything of an unsubstantial or an ephemeral nature in its resistless onward progress. But there are still "footprints on the sands of time" which this mighty flood has not yet reached—perhaps it will never reach some of them—and perhaps some of those which may linger to the very end, will be those beautiful works we have analyzed and admired in this little volume—Mendelssohn's Six Sonatas for the Organ, Op. 65.



INSCRIBED TO DR. W. H. CUMMINGS, F.S.A.,  
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